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 editor & creator - DAMON FOSTER publisher - HUGH GALLAGHER

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LAYOUT

Hugh Gallagher

Sorry for the delay in getting these issues of *Oriental Cinema* out, it's not like we're intentionally missing our deadlines. The problem is that Hugh and I are both very busy guys. Not only do I make another magazine (*Heroes on Film*) and try to make amateur videos every once in a while, but I've got the usual domestic problems to take care of: My mundane dayjob (if you think these zines pay all my bills, guess again), massive bills, a social life filled with turmoil, car maintenance, and wondering how I'm going to afford my next bottle of Prozac. Anyway, I appreciate the tolerance most of you have had when *OC* comes out a little late. It will continue to happen every once in a while, because I've got so much to do. For example, I recently stayed up all night to study for my Drug Test.

To those of you who don't like when I boast or talk about myself, be forewarned: Don't read this editorial, as you'll end up like an ant on a toilet seat—pissed off! That's because I'll yet again start this off on a "self-centered" note, and may contain a little offensive, seemingly irrelevant material. It will be another trip down memory lane and how I first got into this issue's spotlighted topic, Japanese science fiction films. At first I ramble on about my unconventional upbringing, you may be wondering, "I don't get it! What's the point? Is there a connection?" Well, if you're the typically one-dimensional type who lives for film trivia exclusively, don't read on. However, if you're an openminded, well-rounded person who's always up for an amusing or insightful story, kick your shoes off, and re-live my childhood with me, and the experiences which indirectly lead to the existence of the unconventional magazine you hold before you. Besides, when I read a film zine, I think the most interesting parts are when editors let us know a little something about themselves. This way, we come to know the editor/writer a little better. Then when we read this person's reviews, we have a better idea of whether or not we would like the film in question, since we understand where the writer is coming from.

I was only born in the 1960s (though I don't recall exactly when, I was too young at the time), though not necessarily raised in that turbulent era which I now consider ancient history. My limited memories of this beatnik-infested decade come from the more unusual and/or traumatic incidents in my life, usually centered around the druggies & hippies who were my babysitters & parents' friends. Hell, I got my first (and nearly my last) whiff of dope at about the



Editor 19: was here with his son Allen. Damon Foster, wasn't originally very happy about being a father. His attitude changed considerably when he realized that for once there was someone in the family with even less hair!

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ORIENTAL CINEMA

#8

**THE
JAPANESE
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age of four or five (which might explain a lot), and can recall seeing people in my house shooting heroine (or some such drug) into their arms well before I turned six. I recall one chilling experience when I went to

some babysitter's house (who, looking back on it, was probably a druggie too), and upon arrival, heard several bloodcurdling screams (that's how I interpreted them at the time, they could have just been orgasm screams as far as I know) coming from the house. It was definitely her voice, but later, she came out of the house with two typically hippie-looking guys. They all seemed okay, yet when I snooped around inside the house, I saw what I recall as fresh blood stains all over the bedroom. Exactly what had happened, I'll never know-- much like I'll never know why another babysitter's boyfriend seemed to be such a child hater. Unprovoked, this moody psycho took aim at my baby brother and me, with a can (Raid? Blackflag?) of bug spray. I got about as far as, "Hey, that's poisonous and can-" when the next thing I knew, the freak is chasing us into the bathroom and finally cornered us in the shower where he sprayed that crap all over; we felt like we were suffocating, I thought I was going to die. My babysitter stopped him before it was too late, and once it was done coughing, I became overcome with rage and threw my toy dinosaur at him (it hit him on the cheek, it had to hurt!).

And then there was Ricky, yet another freaky boyfriend of an equally freakie babysitter. Mere feet from my bedroom window (right outside my front yard, as I remember), he was on the receiving end of a near fatal stab (it just barely missed the heart) from a customer he'd apparently jilted on a drug deal. But fortunately, Ricky not only recovered from surgery and won his court case against his assailant, but lived on to introduce me to Japanese science fiction! Just think, if that knife had penetrated his heart and he died, you just might not be reading this magazine; now I bet you hope the stab had been fatal!

One afternoon in the late 1960s, Ricky was watching some movie I'd later discover was called ATRAGON. He told me it involved a monster, so I decided to check it out. Today, the only scene I remember from that fateful viewing (my first Japanese monster movie) was of a statue snake (probably Manda) firing a beam from its mouth. At the time, the movie didn't leave a huge impression on me, I mean no more so than other movies of the time, like ONE MILLION YEARS B.C. or MYSTERIOUS ISLAND. But it was at about this time that I also discovered ULTRAMAN, which definitely confirmed I was on an Asian route. LOST IN SPACE and STAR TREK were okay, but my discovery of Godzilla movies had confirmed what ATRAGON and ULTRAMAN had implied-- Japanese science fiction would become a major part of my life.

Strangely, it took a year or two before I realized my favorite science fiction was Japanese. As a twerp, I had no idea the characters in ULTRAMAN, ATRAGON & MONSTER ZERO were Japanese. Somehow I never could notice a physical difference, and the dubbing had me fooled; I thought they were really speaking English! But when I saw GODZILLA VS. THE SEA MONSTER (my 2nd Godzilla flick), somehow I began to finally notice they all looked "foreign". But since they seemed to speak

English, I assumed the films were made locally, especially for (and by) nearby, syndicated TV stations. That all changed in around 1972, when a few badly dubbed scenes in THE H-MAN (the girl who 'sings' in the chah) and MOTHRA (Franklin Sakai: "Put away the camera now", or something like that, where he sounded suspiciously British to me), which had me saying, "Hey! Wait a minute?! Their mouths are moving strangely, how can they talk that way without stuttering and breaking up the words?" Finally, it all fell into place; it all became bloody obvious, "Japanese people in Japan must really speak Japanese-- after all, we Americans speak American", I reasoned. "My friends and I don't speak Japanese, so why would them Japanese talk like me?"

Once I figured all this out (at around seven or eight years old), I realized why I preferred Godzilla, Ultraman, Starman, Gamera, etc. over King Kong and THE OUTER LIMITS; them Japanese had a "certain something" when it came to making enjoyable sci-fi. Over the years, despite inevitable flack taken from those who just didn't understand, I just got more and more into Japanese sci-fi, and its various genres including superheroes and



cartoons. By the late 1970s, there seemed to be a sudden surge of people in the animation fandom. Never in my life had I used words like "geek", "nerd", or "dork", but inevitably the words began popping up many times when I attempted to tolerate fans at "Japanimation" festivals in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

I didn't quite fit in with that which I personally considered a dorky, narrowminded crowd, so once I had outgrown SPEED RACER, I saw no reason to continue to watch lots of cartoons; not so long as more live action stuff continued to exist. So although there are countless animated sci-fi movies & shows, I'm excluding them for the duration of this issue, since there are already several anime zines out there, and there are so many obscure live action productions which deserve some long overdue credit. Besides, Japanese cartoons are a whole complete, stable, independent, thriving genre within themselves. Who do you think of when you hear the term "Japanese sci-fi"? What comes to mind first? Godzilla or Dunbine?

Also excluded (I'm sorry to say) are most productions involving superheroes. Beyond a doubt, ULTRAMAN, MIRRORMAN, the Kamen Riders, etc. are excellent examples of Japanese sci-fi, but they too are a large genre (filled with sub-categories and spinoffs) in itself. Over the years, no other English-language publication has given as much coverage to Japanese superheroes as OC has, and with my newer magazine, HEROES ON FILM, superheroes will continue to get lots of exposure. From this here "Japanese Sci-Fi" issue, I'll also exclude Japanese horror

& fantasies like THE MAGIC SERPENT, the Majin flicks or THE THREE TREASURES. These genres may be special topics for future issues.

Okay, now that that's out of the way, I'm going to share another personal story from my past, only because I think it's funny, so there! I has nothing to do with Asian filmfdom, so don't read on, if you think it's a waste of your time. Anyway, the story is just a minor, insignificant incident which lasted mere seconds, but I found it humorous. I was a kid in the 1970s, riding with my father (noted artist Larry Foster, who's whale paintings & sculptures are in museums & books all over the world) through Jack in the Box's drive-thru (the only connection this story has with Japanese sci-fi is that we were in the same car which took me to see GODZILLA VS. THE COSMIC MONSTER!). As we pulled up to the fibre-glass, talking clown head, a large dog (it looked like a pit bull) began walking toward our car. He'd been looking for food near the garbage dumpster, and now seemed interested in knowing if we'd give him a hand out. My dad decided to hazard a guess as the dog's mouth began to move (yawning, I think). Dad's ventriloquism was dead-on target that day (the odds were a million to one against this feat being pulled off convincingly), as he threw his voice, making it look like the dog said, "Welcome to Jack in the Box! May I take your order, please?" in a typically Goofy and/or cartoon dog voice. Oh well, it seemed hilarious at the time; I guess you just had to be there.

Damon (the Editor) Foster, P.O. Box 576, Fremont, CA, 94537-0576



How's it going, ya' old punk? I bet you're finally making some \$\$\$ off Oriental Cinnabar. /Yes, but not enough. It seems that no matter how many stores OC appears in, I still gotta keep my mundane day job to make ends meet in my runned-down apartment, and I'm always still just a paycheck away from poverty! I'm sure most of my readers are still better off than me, especially now that I'm stuck paying a fortune in taxes every year. /D? That's great, although for a while there, I thought you were selling out. You put out a couple of tame OCs,

and I'm not writing about the first couple of issues either. I think it was about the fourth or fifth, one that had me worried. Since Dracula puts out some pretty sleazy zines, I couldn't see why you felt the need for a PC. OC, except to make bucks off those uptight sci-fi and arthouse geeks. From what I could tell at my old loser job (a place that sells everything from comic books to hardcore porn; and yes, it's a family store), it didn't work. Those sad but (as always) informative issues didn't sell at all; we usually sold about two copies before OC's downfall.

I see a new golden dawn for ORIENTAL CINEMA! Yes, now that you've regained your pissy punk prose, I can once again sing the gospel to all the lost sheep. It's time to herd the masses for the big slaughter in your name! And they will come...willingly!

What the hell are you talking about? As for OC's changes, see them as phases. When I make an issue while I'm in a good mood (a rare occasion), the issue may seem tame and/or happy-go-lucky. But when I've been through a severe domestic crisis which nearly drove me to suicide (so I settled for drugs instead), the OC's of that period reflect the negativity, anger and severe hatred which burned within me. So long as I remain moody, so will OC. /D?

What's up with those biased, blatant reviews of your films? Couldn't you get someone else to do it? /Exactly! I wanted John Marshall to review them, since he had delivered mixed reactions to them in a letter he had sent me. But he was too busy to meet my deadline, and I decided what the hell! Considering all the injuries we've suffered doing these vid-ies, I feel we deserve biased reviews, and a chance to act like bigshots! Especially after so many pervers in the sleaze-exploitation rag scene trashed them mercilessly, this makes up for ibrings and evens it out. /D? I don't believe that Allen Reisolf is any further removed from you than your lubricated right hand. /I'm afraid you're wrong. Me, Allen Reisolf, myself and I are all left-handed! /D? The weirdest part of it is that you're not really trying to pull the wool over your flock's cat-racts. The writing style and sentiments

are soooo DF that only a stupid new-comer who jacks off to RANMA 1/2 would be fooled. (oops, please excuse that stain. Someone just flashed a picture of Cutey Honey. ~~Naked!~~ Heh, heh, snivel, spurt. Groovy).

Well Damon, here we come to the end of my annual, pointless letter. I'm trying to mellow out and not piss anyone off, but I'm such a fuckin' asshole. I just want to be accepted. please, ~~love me!~~ Anyway, keep the fun alive and don't become boring and critical.

David Mullen
Minneapolis

Your magazine is stupid and immature. I love it. Now, about those tongs gangs and triads . . .

Tongs are, and were, associations which followed the Chinese secret society pattern. The triads are, and were, associations which followed the Chinese secret society pattern. Never the less, they are not necessarily the same, but sometimes they kind of, sort of are. If one wishes more details, they can read my book *Tongs, Gangs, and Triads: Chinese Crime Groups in North America* (Palladin Press, 1995).

In response to Marvin Quan's letter, I must point out that it's a bad idea to pester the FBI or befriend Chinese mobsters. I have found that it's best to avoid contact with cops, gangsters, and psychiatrists whenever possible, as they all have the potential to catch you and lock you up when all you were trying to do was have a little harmless fun!

Peter Huston
New York

I just bought a copy of ORIENTAL CINEMA for the first time, diverted by the Gamera cover. One word says it all: outstanding! I fully intend to now make OC a regular purchase. Recently the Chicago UPR station ran a Gamerathon, showing the Sandy Frank versions; and I thought I'd let you know a couple of things.

First, in their copy of GAMERA VS. BARUGON, the jungle scenes were included, not that they really added all that much. Secondly, I noticed a slight error in your review. Barugon uses a mist from his battering-ram tongue to freeze things, not his "rainbow". The rainbow is a heat-ray, which in fact draws Gamera to him to begin with. Once again, I really enjoy your magazine, and I will continue to purchase it.

Mark Vitok
Illinois

Congratulations on the latest OC, the American Martial Arts Movie Issue. Outstanding info as ever, OC should be reaching its anniversary, huh? *(Believe it or not, OC's 20th anniversary is just two years away: I first came out around 1977. -DF)* Over the years, you've taken a lot of heat & complaints over OCs content & the videos you've made (AGE OF DEMONS, HOT DOGS ON THE RUN, THE ADVENTURES OF MYSTERON, etc). To all those bitches & wannabes, fuck off! Who are you to criticize something that you are in no way capable of producing yourself? I would like to ask you assholes a few questions:

1. Have you ever made your own martial arts video?
2. Do you have your own magazine?
3. Have you ever worked on a professional film?
4. Have you ever been laid? By a woman (not including your mother)?

The answers to these questions is probably 'no'. While Damon and I have done all the above, perhaps even laying your mother. So quit complaining. I've known Damon for many years and he puts out his mags & films because they're entertaining and just for the hell of it. But it seems that a few so-called rival magazine writers like to show themselves screwing a stuffed animal in the pages of their magazine for your entertainment & viewing pleasure. (I thought for sure women were our opposite sex but I guess stuffed animals are all they can get—since their pet gerbils turned them down too). It seems that we run into these perverts every so often at horror/fantasy conventions and believe me, they're a pathetic sight to see. Which brings to mind a very amusing story:

It seems that these sickos were printing a lot of negative material on the fighting techniques that Damon & our friends have put into the films. Well, we approached these pussies and threatened to kick their asses all over the con floor—and make no mistake, we meant business. Oh well, just like we thought: They had no guts, no balls. No shit. It was nice to see them nearly crap in their pants when the real deal showed up in front of them. Boy, you should have seen the look on their faces! Can't hide behind a computer this time, can you? As we finally met them in person, they looked like the type that you would towel-slap on their ass in the Boys' gym, total con-geeks. For those guys to say that we can't fight for shit, being an ex-Airborne Ranger in the U.S. Army & being exposed to martial arts, wrestling & boxing all my life, I think me and my friends can handle ourselves pretty well. *(Yeah, and that's not just in*

the Men's room! -DF)

Butch Portillo
California

I've seen the rag mag *(One of the ones mentioned in the above letter. The names of such zines are withheld so as not to give these perverts any free publicity. -DF)* and you guys are right! That damn zine is full of filth, your OC zine is a thousand times better than this junk those pck-asses print. You and your friends had the right to be mad as hell. If a lot of sleaze-asses were to insult me & my mag, I would be pissed too and want revenge! However, Damon, don't sink down to their level *(DF here. When me and a few friends paid those sick bootleggers a personal visit in the flesh, we weren't sinking down to their level. Their level is to hide behind their computers and write unjust insults about people. Me and my karate kickin' pals, however, didn't make it a habit to harass people in the pages of magazines. Nor did we do it in the form of a letter. We didn't do it over the phone. We do it in person, man to man, face to face (and would have been more than happy to give them a private demonstration in martial arts, right there at their table, in the convention's dealers room. They wussed out a wise move. Besides, I've been attached & trashed in so many worthless exploitation/bootleg rags; not to mention increasing hate mail from the gay community and Politically Correct whiners. I don't care anymore. I figure if my zines were really as poor as the perverted sleazezards say, you wouldn't be reading this; you wouldn't be picking up OC and HOF in stores all over the world. I rest my case. -DF)* You and your zine are far better than them, be proud!

Lenell Bridges
Illinois

Your article on GAVAN (OC#2, 17th edition/1994) is very interesting with its useful episode list, helping me know which episodes I have because there were only French titles on the TV guide, when there were any!

I thought you'd be interested in some information on the French version of GAVAN: 27 episodes were shown from 12/18/85 to 6/25/86, Wednesdays from 11:35 to 12:00 on our second channel, under the name of X-OR (nothing like GAVAN, is it?). Gavan's human name isn't Ichijō Retsu but Gordon, his dragon/robot is Morox. Mimi becomes Pimi and Retsu's father Boisa is Bolsar. The Maku baddies are called 'The Serrex', and the leader of Maku, Don Hora, strangely becomes Lioux BMX III! The baddie, wear-

ing blue trousers and looking like a pirate, Hunter Killer, I think, is changed to Karez.

I also wanted to congratulate you on your new zine, **HEROES ON FILM**, especially the "Sentai" story, for the great stills and everything else, as well.

Longue via an **ORIENTAL CINEMA**. **HE-ROES ON FILM**, and their genius creator

Damien Martinet
France

/And now for something completely different/

It's been a long time since I've picked up **QC**, but the lengthy article on Daiei studios caught my eye. While the article was substantial, it depended very heavily on the sources you cited and offered little new information. Still, an interesting review of Daiei's history.

Obviously, you are taking a different approach these days, a far cry from your earlier fan publication ("Japan's Giant Monsters? "Giants from Japan"? /Try "Japanese Movie Sci-Fi", you creep! -DF/ At that time, I was putting out a similar, small-scale zine "Monsters of Japan", which read like it was written by a 14-year old, because it was. /So what's your excuse today? Deciphering your chicken scratch writing is harder than frozen chocolate -DF/ Yours was a little more juvenile, and I believe at the time you were around 10 or 11 years old. For their scale and intent our publications were entirely acceptable.

Out to 1995 **QC** is a relatively slick, deceptively professional appearing publication. It is also filled with unnecessary text immaturity and a "Grind House" approach that is insulting to both Japanese fantasy and HK action fans. As you know, there are now innumerable publications devoted to HK action, trash and non-Asian sleaze films that have adopted a vulcanized version of Rick Sullivan's **GORE GAZETTE**-style anecdotal, obscenity-laden approach to film commentary. To Rick's credit (and please note that I've never spoken to Rick), he managed to confine his nastiness to the films and the sleazy theaters they played in, thus offering the reader a chance to simultaneously (and viciously) experience the film and the viewing environment just by reading. Chas Balun modified this approach into a redneck, but still in context, gorehound appeal. Today Mike Accomando's "Dreadful Pleasures" effectively applies this free-form to all facets of horror/sci-fi/action cinema. /If you had any brains, you would know I'm not involved in the exploitation zine scene, and am for the most part unfamiliar with Rick Sullivan

and Chas Balun. My writing style couldn't possibly be an imitation of something I've never seen! I'm not following a trend, but trying to present an alternate site within the Asian zine scene, trying to be sort of the 'darkside of Asian zine-dom'. You say "It's been a while since you picked up an **QC**. Then you're in no position to talk, you haven't seen the full scale. My motto is to Inform But Amuse. Okay, so you personally weren't amused. But other readers have something called a sense of humor, you heard of it? If you really find **QC**'s style nauseating & deceptive, you're in luck! There are numerous Japanese sci-fi/hero & Hong Kong/martial arts zines which prefer the exact same technical, non-humorous style you need! Why make every magazine the same way? -DF/

Your imitation of this style is nauseating. It's interesting that you say the older you get, the more the Gamera films embarrassed you. The story you relate at the end of your editorial is embarrassing to you and every other fan of Japanese fantasy films. **ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS** pales by comparison. The fact that you derive excitement from verbally assaulting a teenage girl, and worse yet are proud enough to publish it, is sickening /Hellharrise here! sickening is the word for it. It reminds me of the time that I was at home and a lady got my number by accident, she thought that she had reached her tax man. Me being quickwitted, thought that I would play along /I proceeded to tell her that she owed \$1300,000 in back taxes. Also, I told her that her welfare was going to be cut off (of course not really knowing if she was on welfare or not, but I bit pay dirt. She screamed that she can barely make ends meet now. Then I told her that she had too many kids allowed on her tax forms. So I told her only option was to get a Norplant so that she could not have kids for 5 years. Or until she paid back the money, which ever came first. Yes sickening is the word for it. Even more sickening is that it got printed. We are completely ashamed of ourselves. Until the next phone call that is -Barrie Evans/ and disrespectful to fans who are purchasing your magazine to read about, well, "oriental cinema". If you were really that vacuous, that desperate for material, solicit more aggressively for submissions, /DF here, Solicit more aggressively for submissions? You mean like this? "God damn it! SEND ME SUBMISSIONS, or I'll beat the living crap out of all of you! Hardly ANYONE sends me reviews anymore, so I'm gonna get a machine gun and blow everyone away! I just can't take it anymore! As that kid singing the

bologna song once said, "How's that?" -DF/ or print more illustrations (of which you obviously have an abundance of).

Your lack of substantial material relevant to the topic of oriental cinema is made even more painfully obvious by your constant need to generate conflict, apparently just to fill space. As in, "this hyped, new film will create the usual group of trendies and newcomers who would have never watched a Gamera movie, but will lie, and claim they've always liked Gamera. Expect these two-faced geeks to start having serious debates as to who's stronger, Zagra or Jiger?" Which is more relevant? Your concern about fictitious individuals who suddenly like Gamera? Who cares? /You obviously do, since you take time to mention something that took up only a few lines in the editorial. Your very existence confirms in my mind that such individuals aren't fictitious -DF/ Who are these people? Or a debate regarding the strength of Zagra and Jiger (equally trivial) /No wonder you mentioned it. Since you singled out such a small portion of **QC**, I can only assume you're concerned with this topic. Since you're so curious, I think maybe Jiger would win, because as I recall, he had more lethal weapons. On the other hand, if Zagra had one of his weapon-equipped spaceships with him, Jiger would be at a disadvantage. There, you happy? I prefer this is the type of journalism you think, so get a life! -DF/ You're doing the same obsessing you accuse others of doing, only in a more hostile way.

If you're so disinterested in your subject matter, why write about it? "Why not have a long, boring look at Daiei"? Are you qualifying your article because you know it's just a rehash of previously written material? /DF here! Maybe so, but some of this written material was only available in Japanese before I painstakingly had it translated! For you to assume that all my readers have already read & memorized the older sources (most of which is hard to find) is ignorant. As for my usage of the word "boring", it was an extremely tedious, expensive and time-consuming article to write. At least give me credit for acknowledging where the info came from, I wasn't stealing anyone's glory, yet was informing a whole new generation. Perhaps you should think twice (or at all) before you spout off. -DF/

Your disciple John Marshall writes in a style suspiciously identical to your own. In his review of **ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS**, he writes, "at the risk of sounding Kaiju-blasphemous", while much of the rest of the issue is just that. And it's a shame that the crew at **MST-3000** can't be (continued on page 50)

LIVE ACTION, MAINLY NON- SUPERHERO SCI-FI OF JAPAN

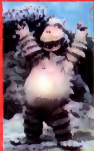


While us Americans here in America (what a coincidence!) had things like FLASH GORDON and BUCK ROGERS in the



1930s, then the Japanese (over in Japan; another coincidence!) entered the celluloid science fiction scene comparatively late (1949, to be fairly exact; I don't know the exact day & time). They did have their one-dimensional comicbook superheroes, but these characters would not reach live action form until the 1950s.

I idiotically reported in OC's Gamara issue (OC#6; 21st edition), that the first Japanese science fiction movie was NIJO OTOKO ("Rainbow Man", not to be confused with Tobo's 1972 TV program RAINBOW MAN). I've now seen this crude oldie, and plan on trashing it a few pages from now. Produced by Dai-ichi, this film (recently released on laserdisc in Japan) was more of a murder mystery, but it almost hinted at some sci-fi and/or fantasy aspect. It almost got the hall rolling, and was followed by TOMOI NINGEN ARAWARU ("The Transparent Man Appears"), though it too could also be considered sort of a horror flick or mystery, as it was inspired by our own flicks like Claude Rains' THE INVISIBLE MAN (Universal; 1933) and John Hall's THE INVISIBLE AGENT (Universal; 1942). TOMOI NINGEN ARAWARU, however, is the movie most people refer to when naming Japan's first science fiction film, for what it's worth. But even before production began on Dai-ichi's NIJO OTOKO and TOMOI NINGEN ARAWARU, Japanese companies (and of course, Dai-ichi in particular) were on their way to the world of sci-fi; the first Dai-ichi flick to use special effects was actually KABUTE KAMIKAZE WA FUKU (1943), which was followed by 1944's IKERU ISU. Though neither





movie can be considered science fiction, they're important historically because a young, pre-Godzilla Eiji Tsuburaya (a freelancer at the time, he also worked frequently for Toho) lent a helping hand on FX.

Aaah yes, celebrated FX wizard Eiji Tsuburaya—without him, this magazine wouldn't exist. His descendants continue to work on FX today. So no Japanese sci-fi magazine could be remotely complete without at least mentioning the late lamented Eiji Tsuburaya (1901-1970). He's the father of Japanese special effects, some say the father of Japanese science fiction in general. He developed an interest in films when he was a boy, and 'borrowed' (heh heh) some money from his father's store and bought a film viewer. This was young Eiji's first personal exposure to film, and would later indirectly lead to his heavy involvement in the more imaginative aspects of Japanese cinema.

Universally, it was probably in the 1950s, during the post-“Atomic Age” that science fiction in general became more widespread than flying limbs in a leper disco. Dai-ji's B&W film *TETSU NO TSUME* (“Claws of Iron”), which combined ideas from *MURDERERS IN THE RUE MORGUE* with *DR. JEKYLL & MR. HYDE* came out on 2/24/51, but of course, it was Toho's groundbreaking upstart *GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS* (1954) which really got the ball rolling for the Japanese sci-fi boom, giant monster or otherwise. Although crude by today's standards, *GODZILLA* was the first Japanese science fictioner to get international acclaim, and spawned possibly the most successful movie series of all-time. Interesting to note that also in 1954, Toho produced a near ripoff of Dai-ji's *TOMEI NINGEN ARAWARU*, called simply *TOMEI NINGEN* (“Invisible Agent”).

But Dai-ji wasn't about to be left in the cold by Toho's mega-super-doober hit *GODZILLA*. Dai-ji jumped back onto the sci-fi bandwagon in 1956 with *WARN-*

ING FROM SPACE (called *UCHUJIN TOKYO NI ARAWARU*, which means “Space-men appear in Tokyo”). Viewed today, *WARNING FROM SPACE* comes off as a tedious, talky bore (even dubbed in English it's so dull it made me want to cry), but it had the distinction of being Japan's first science fiction movie shot in color. The following year Dai-ji bounced back with a sort-of sequel to 1949's *TOMEI NINGEN ARAWARU*, called *TOMEI NINGEN NO HAE OTOKO* (“The Transparent Man and the Fly Man”). Viewed today, all three B&W “Tomei Ningen” films almost seem like a trilogy, even though one was from Toho, and two were Dai-ji productions.

With the advent of both the *GODZILLA* monster-type films and the *MOONLIGHT MASK* superhero-type TV serials, there were many cross-overs and



TOMEI NINGEN

hybrids produced. The Japanese media labeled these “Shonen Eiga” or “Boys' Pictures”; these could be films like *SPACE GREYHOUND* (aka *INVASION OF THE NEPTUNE MEN*) or TV series like *MABOROSHI TANTEI* (“Phantom Detective”) which were Horror/Sci-Fi/Superhero/Monster/Juvenile tales, stories which fit many genre slots. There were some early Japanese sci-fi TV shows which are still virtually unknown (with little information coming out of even Japanese-published Genre-TV books & periodicals, such as *UCHUSEN ENGERU-GO NO BOKEN* (“Adventures of Space-ship Angel”), *MIRAI TOSHI MARUMARU-HACHI* (“Future City 008”), the Gerry Anderson-inspired marionette show *UCHU PATROLU PEPE* (“Space Patrol Pepe”; reportedly broadcast in the U.S. in the early '60s as “Galaxy Patrol”), and sort of a “Rocky Jones meets The Untouchables”-like program about the cosmic adventures of *UCHU JI-MEN* (“The Space G-Men”). August Ragone has made the research into these obscure shows his life-work. “Ever since I saw the behind-the-scenes shots for *SPACESHIP ANGEL* in *Forry Ackerman's SPACEMEN* magazine back in 1970, I haven't slept a wink—even living in Japan for over a year, I could uncover anything! I must find these shows and their secrets. Reveal them to the world, or die!”, stated Ragone recently, while on a drunken binge in a pub near Shinjuku.

Thankfully, not all sci-fi shows of the late '50s/early '60s are as obscure. There were many superhero shows and cartoons, not to mention sci-fi classics (again, many of which are hybrids) like *ULTRA Q* (*ULTRAMAN* without the superhero), *MIGHTY JACK* (*ATLANTON* meets James Bond), *OPERATION: MYSTERY* (*MISSION IMPOSSIBLE* meets *TWILIGHT ZONE*), *MARUSHU DAMEO* (*TOBOR THE GREAT* meets *LEAVE IT TO BEAVER*), *SPY-CATCHER J-3* (*MAN FROM UNCLE* meets James Bond), *CAPTAIN ULTRA* (Edmund Hamilton's “Captain Future”, Japanese-style), *LIGHTSPEED ESPER* (*COMMANDO CODY* meets *OUTER LIMITS* with kids), *MONSTER PRINCE* (Feral Kid meets *Nessie* for *Godzilla* action), and many more. It is here that it becomes difficult to separate solid sci-fi from the superhero genre, since superheroes are basically a subdivision of science fiction. For example, both *LIGHTSPEED ESPER* (“Kosoku Esupa”) and *CAPTAIN ULTRA* could be considered superhero programs, but not when compared to truly superhuman heroes like *Ultraman* or *Kamen Rider*.

Of course, these TV series, coupled with the Kaiju Eiga, influenced and added fuel to the sci-fi boom in Japan and abroad, with many exports covering the globe. And in 1965, Toei decided to get in on the international and/or American sci-fi scene by producing at least six thrillers in Japan, using Japanese FX and film crews, but starring 99% American casts. The idea was to produce a whole new genre of films of this halfbreed style; using Japanese production values, but with enough American stars to increase greater



The cast of TATAKAE MIGHTY JACK.

appear abroad. The first was **TERROR BENEATH THE SEA** (1966), which starred Sonny (then called Shinichi) Chiba with an otherwise caucasian cast, and later came **THE GREEN SLIME** (1968), which, if it had any Japanese actors at all, they were the ones in the monster costumes. But despite an abundance of English-speaking whites in these standard thrillers, audiences were never fooled—the two films became considered “Japanese” movies regardless. Both films are enjoyable sci-fi tales in their own right, but weren’t successful enough for Toei to produce the proposed additional entries in the “Japan/U.S. genre”, unfortunately. Though they did try again in 1978 with **MESSAGE FROM SPACE** (it too had Sonny Chiba in an international cast). The movie was considered little more than a **STAR WARS** ripoff, when actually, the story is based on the Japanese novel “*Satomi Hakkenden*” or “*Saga of the Eight Dogs of Satomi*” (recently made into an over-rated cartoon video release, which anime-geeks everywhere think is a wonderful new cartoonized story. Think again you shut-in bastards! *Satomi Hakkenden* has been filmed at least a half a dozen times—including the brilliant 1982 Kinji Fukusaku film **THE LEGEND OF THE EIGHT SAMURAI**. And you thought that **STAR WARS** itself was blazingly original).

By the late 1960s, there was a big boom in popularity for Japanese sci-fi films, which were getting dubbed in several languages for release in a number of countries. So what happened in the 1970s? The popularity & profits declined, though I personally liked the 1970s movies (i.e. **YOG MONSTER FROM SPACE**) every bit as much as the 1960s “classics”. Some speculate that it was Elji Tsuburaya’s death which contributed to the over all decline of Japanese sci-fi. Tsuburaya was a well-respected, almost feared man on the Toho lot, and so long as he had clout, he was determined to make Toho’s science fiction films as good as possible. Seems that after he passed away, a number of Toho staffers were relieved that they could now try and cut costs at the risk of delivering an inferior product. If so, it just goes to prove that an inferior product offers inferior box office profits.

Toho & Godzilla weren’t the only SF icons to suffer in the early 1970s. Dai’s bankruptcy (see OC’s Gamera issue for complete details) closed the company, which put an effective end to the Gamera series. Another factor which may have very well played a part in the near disappearance of Japanese sci-fi was the changing taste of the audience. In the early 1970s, sci-fi fans had discovered new forms of entertainment, animated robots

founded by the **MAZINGA** programs, and the live action superheroes of the whole post-**KAMEN RIDER** genre. The eventual triumph of superheroes (don’t get me wrong, I don’t see it as a bad thing and love superheroes) over solid sci-fi could actually be spotted a mile away. **ULTRA Q** was successful as ordinary sci-fi, but when it became **ULTRAMAN**, it took TV audiences by storm. With superheroes becoming the big thing in the early 1970s, Toho tried to compromise with another hybrid, and adapt Godzilla to fit the times, teaming him up with Ultraman-ish superheroes like Jet Jaguar (in **GODZILLA VS. MEGALON**) and Zene Fighter (in **RYUSEI NINGEN ZONE**). But you can’t teach an old dinosaur new tricks, and although I personally loved Godzilla’s adventures in the superhero genre, such productions are looked at by most underserving fans as unintended, campy comedies which fall flat.

Superheroes aside, sci-fi TV series of the ‘70s were rare but there, including: **EMERGENCY COMMAND 104/10-10** (Science Patrol w/o Ultraman), **THE APE CORPS** (PLANET OF THE APES meets THE FUGITIVE), **DINOSAUR CATCHERS**, **BORN FREE** and **DINOSAUR WAR: AIZENBORG** (Land of the Lost meets Daktari/Ultraman-model animation/cartoon hybrids), **STARWOLF** (Edmund Hamilton goes Japanese, again), **DINOSAUR FIGHTING TEAM KOSEIDON** (DINOSAURUS meets THE TIME TUNNEL), **TANZER 5** (Thunderbirds meet Zero-Tester-live-action miniatures/cartoon characters hybrid), **UNBALANCE** (TWILIGHT ZONE meets OUTER LIMITS), **BLITZKREIG STRATER 5** (KEYHUNTER meets THE GREEN HORNET), **NHK BOYS’ DRAMA SERIES** (anthology-based TV movies, generally written for a young adult audience, and frequently featuring SF stories), and of course, **MESSAGE FROM SPACE: GALACTIC BATTLE** (Space Ninjas meet... uh, more Space Ninjas), the TV sequel to Toei’s motion picture. As is obvious from some of the titles, these so-called science fiction TV shows were closely related to the still hip & happening superhero genre. At about this time, Toei attempted another sci-fi film, one which they boasted as somehow being their “highest budgeted” movie ever.

The movie in question was the staggeringly bad **LEGEND OF THE DINOSAUR** (aka **LEGEND OF DINOSAURS AND MONSTER BIRDS**, & **THE MONSTER FROM MOUNT FUJI**). This has got to be the worst Japanese sci-fi flick ever made, despite a decent prop (a large dinosaur head). The miserable film is a classic example of just how bad Japanese sci-fi got in the 1970s. It’s been speculated

that Toei only produced it to cash in on all the hype for **NESSIE**, a joint production between Toho and Britain’s Hammer Studios about the Loch Ness monster. If **NESSIE** was going to be anything like **LEGEND OF THE DINOSAUR**, it’s a damn good thing the movie was never completed (and to the best of my knowledge, no footage was shot at all because Hammer failed to deliver their end of the budget). So it appears to be the first case where only the ripoff actually came out, its possible inspiration never did.

As the more action-packed thrills of the quality oriented superhero programs declined in favor of toned-down “violence”, repetitious formulas and over done, gaudy special effects, it was time to bring back some blasts from the past; them blasts being movie monsters; you can’t keep a good monster down. The superhero boom peaked in the 1970s, and although there are memorable superhero programs from the early 1980s too, the 1970s are officially the Golden Years of Japanese Superheroes. So Gamera made his long overdue return in 1980, in **GAMERA SUPER MONSTER**, created by the revived Dai-Go. Though the film itself was trash, it did feature Gamera being aided by a team of female superheroes not unlike those on Japanese TV. Four years later, it was Godzilla who finally made another comeback in Toho’s 1984 film **GOJIRA**. Shown in the U.S. as **GODZILLA 1985**, it was far superior to Dai’s futile Gamera revival film, and spawned sort of a “Godzilla: The Next Generation” film series (featuring the most high-tech FX ever seen in Godzilla flicks) which has lasted ‘til this day. Predictably, it was only a matter of time before Godzilla’s longtime box office rival Gamera made another comeback too, in 1995’s **GAMERA, GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE**.

So what lies ahead for Japanese sci-fi? As reported in OC’s Gamera issue (a couple issues ago), Gamera has made a comeback which is not only successful, but long overdue (watch for his upcoming rematch with possibly with Jiger, other rumors say a giant insect). At the time of this typing, Godzilla’s future seems less certain. He’s finally getting killed off (again, but for real this time, again) in the upcoming **GODZILLA VS. DESTROYA** (**GOJIRA TAI DESUTOROIA**; not necessarily “Destroyer” as many articles state), directed by Takao Ogawara. Shogo Tomiyama (the film’s Chief Producer) of Toho told reporters that after 21 films, there just aren’t enough new ideas left. “That’s why we’ve decided to put an end to the series. We wanted to finish with Godzilla while he is still a star”, Shogo Tomiyama said. It was announced

(by Toho) during the week of March 12, 1995 (coinciding with GAMERA, GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE's release) that the final (?) Godzilla movie will feature a return to the gloomy atmosphere of 1954's GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS. GODZILLA VS. DESTROYA's screenplay was written by Kazuki Omori and the special effects are being done by Koichi Kawakita, of course. The story has Godzilla battling what looks like a huge mutant crustacean (with bat wings), actually created by the Oxygen Destroyer (not "Destroia"), of all things! Supposedly, in order for Godzilla to defeat this new monster the Destroia, Godzilla apparently has to increase the level of radiation in his body; and doing so proves fatal for both of them. At one point, I was told that the 'baby Godzilla' (now grown up) will continue the Godzilla tradition in his own series of films. Whether or not Toho will follow through with this remains to be seen. GODZILLA VS. DESTROYA is scheduled for release on December 9, 1995.

In other Japanese sci-fi news, there seems to be a slight revival of interest in the genre here in America. While I very much doubt things will ever be like they were in the 1950s or 1960s (when plenty of Japanese sci-fi flicks got successful theatrical releases), there are occasional English dubbings of films like ZERAM, 8MAN (the crappy live action version I trashed many issues ago), TETSUO THE IRON MAN and CYBER NINJA appearing in even the most suburban of videotapes. Meanwhile, the newer Godzilla movies have all been dubbed in English for British release only; but naturally, many of these videotapes are reaching America via the bootlegging underground. Also of increasing interest are other cool FX flicks like YAMATO TAKERU (a remake of THE THREE TREASURES) and ZIPANG, but both are period films and are fantasies, not science fiction.

Meanwhile, the Americanization/gentrification of Japanese sci-fi continues

in the tradition of Saban's POWER RANGERS/VR. TROOPERS/MASKED RIDER (I guess Toei had nothing to do with making them), and onto the next level: Original American productions based on Japanese TV/Movie/Comics. In the recent years we've seen the two GUYVER films, the Zatoichi rip-off BLIND RAGE, the still-threatening Tri-Star Godzilla project... and what's next? Gary "I fought Jackie Chan" Daniels and Malcom McLaren, oops, I mean McDowell in FIST OF THE NORTH STAR (straight to video? What do you think?), CRYING FREEMAN (looks good, but I'm sure it will be no DRAGON FROM RUSSIA), DRIFTING CLASSROOM (based on the '70s comicbook by horror artist Kaz Umetzu, and not the late '80s flick by Nobuhiko "HOUSE" Ohayashi), and last, but unfortunately not least, SPEED RACER! This flick is supposed to star Johnny Depp as Speed (I'm sure he's done it, but can he play the character?) and Nicolas "No, I'm not embarrassed that I starred in VALLEY GIRL" Cage as Racer X. What's next? ULTRA Q as an ABC Monday Night Sitcom? Let's see, three



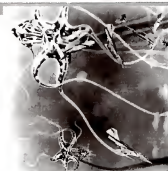
Top left & right: WARNING FROM SPACE
Middle left & right: DAGORA THE SPACE MONSTER
Bottom four photos: TERROR BENEATH THE SEA





best friends live in an apartment together, one is a female news-photographer, the other is a charter pilot and amateur SF writer, and inbetween monster stories they don't always get along, allowing for amusing results and then it all gets resolved and they can hug each other at the end? But, on a serious note: There have been two recent tragedies in the world of Japanese sci-fi, two men who left an indelible impact on the genre are gone.

Director Hajime Sato passed away on



May 10, 1995 of intestinal cancer at the age of 66. Sato was one of the more eccentric of fantasy directors and produced a number of gems including *THE HEARSE ARRIVES THRICE* (Sanpo-suru Reikusha), *GHOST STORY: THE HUNCH-BACK* (Kaidan Semushi-Otoko), *GOLDEN BAT* (Ogon Batto), *TERROR BENEATH THE SEA* (Kaitai Daisensou), and the amazing *BODYSNATCHER FROM HELL* (Kyukusuki Gokemidoro). He also directed a number of TV series including the sci-fi actioner *CAPTAIN ULTRA*. His interesting composition, camera angles and lighting will be missed.

Producer Noboru Tsuburaya passed away on June 11, 1995 from stomach cancer (cancer is the number one cause of death in Japan). The second son of Eiichi Tsuburaya was a director/producer for Fuji TV from 1958, and left in the early '60s to work for his father at Tsuburaya Productions, founding Tsuburaya Enterprises, the company's merchandising arm. In 1973, when company CEO and elder brother Hajime passed away (having taken over when their father died three years earlier), Noboru took the reins of Tsuburaya Productions over. After many controversial years as its head (many claiming that the salad days of the company were over), Noboru masterminded a huge merchandising blitz in the late '70s which took several years to explode. And explode it did. Without any new Ultra programs, Noboru was able to make Japanese children of the '80s push the ratings of Ultra Series reruns into continued success, and compete with modern shows from Toei. 30 year-old reruns of the original *ULTRAMAN* are still going strong in Japan (some kids even think it's a new show!). No longer nostalgia, *Ultraman* is eternal. And so is the memory of Noboru Tsuburaya. The man who saved Tsuburaya Productions.

So two of the fans' greatest heroes, like Eiichi Tsuburaya, Shin Kishida, Akira Yamaguchi and Ishiro Honda before them, have gone to that great Sci-Fi Studio in the sky, and will be missed. However, the fandom lives on, all over the world. In America today, there's a growing appreciation for Japan's science fiction. There's been a thriving fandom since the 1970s at least, when in my vicinity, people like August Ragone and Bob Johnson held "Japanese Fantasy Conventions", back when VCRs weren't as accessible to the common fan. Naturally, back then, it was a rare treat for fans to be able to get together and watch videos of obscure Japanese films & TV. The tradition continues today, with G-Con; in fact I close this section with a review of G-Con '95.



Gotta' admit, I had some serious doubts about this convention, when I was arranging to get a "Press" membership, co-organizer John Rocco Roberto balked slightly at my being from *ORIENTAL CINEMA*, and informed me that G-Con was not an Asian Genres con, just *Godzilla*! Now how could I take seriously people who want to separate the various Japanese sci-fi genres? The fanzine *G-FAN*, which sponsored the convention, does the same thing by covering just *Godzilla* (reporting on Gamera results in lengthy editorials trying to justify this non-*Godzilla* material). However, my disdain for and fear of this sort of specialization were unwarranted—the con turned out to be not quite as limited in its scope. The centerpiece of the con was a big screen presentation of the new Gamera film (which even I enjoyed) in the main ballroom. In addition was a video room that featured predominantly non-*Godzilla* material (by and large SFX Hero fare, mostly various Ultra Brother & Ultra Clone related programs. The rest of the programming focused on talks and panels about all levels of *Godzilla*/Toho/Tristar minutiae such as a talk on the many different *Godzilla* suits used from film to film; the sort of thing that might be of interest to the casual fans but not terribly engaging for hardcore devotees like me. One talk/panel that perplexed me was called "The Future of G-Fan"—as if Japanese sci-fi fandom lived and breathed by way of this fanzine. On hand for G-Con were representatives from other fanzines like *JAPANESE GIANTS*, *KAIJU REVIEW*, *MARKALITE* and *MONSTER ATTACK TEAM*. I don't know how any of those guys felt, but as the delegate from *ORIENTAL CINEMA*, I thought it was a little pompous.

The combination of being located in an area outside the city and having just one track of programming spelled trouble for the convention. This became apparent on Saturday night, when the programming consisted of a right-long dinner banquet that several con-goers (including myself and my traveling companion) did not attend. The previously mentioned

video room turned out to be a Friday-only deal, leaving us with nothing to do and nowhere to go ("I Wanna' be Sedated"...). We wound up getting drunk in the hotel bar (suffering through a truly awful lounge singer), then watching TV in our room. For this I traveled to Chicago? Sunday was more of the same—Killing time between waking up and heading for the airport by blowing off the rest or our money in the dealers' room (Stupidest purchase: Three Baltan finger puppets). Friday night wasn't as tedious as the rest of the weekend, thanks to the non-sanctioned video room run by Chicago-based video collector Lenell Bridges (I think in conjunction with KAJI REVIEW and Jay Johnson), which featured more esoteric and scarce fare such as MIRRORMAN, IRON KING, ULTRAMAN POWERED, and my favorite, MEGALOMAN. Unfortunately, this video room too, was a Friday-only deal, leaving us stranded the rest of the time. With none of the extra-curricular activities typical of your average sci-fi convention (A hospitality suite? Parties? etc.), G-Con came close to feeling like a one-day comicbook/collectors' show stretched out over three days.

In all fairness to the organizers, this was their first effort of putting this together as a real convention, so I think cutting them some slack is in order. Lord knows I wouldn't wanna' be in their shoes. But still, in future efforts (and I do hope they keep this going), it might be wise to think things through a little better. For instance, I would wager that a large portion of the attendees of this small (limited to 500 people) convention were hardcore Japanese sci-fi/ Godzilla enthusiasts, and given that, a good 40% of the programming should have been geared for that audience rather than be put together for the beginner/casual fan. I'm not sure if this was intentional or if it merely reflected the limited scope/knowledge of the organizers (G-FAN editor J.D. Lees claimed to have had no knowledge of what was going on in the genre until the last few years, which I find hard to believe). But even more importantly, an effort should be made to maintain either a second track of programming or at least a full-time video room, so that there's something to do if the banquet or "Godzilla 301" talks don't interest you. It would also be nice if the many fanzine folks got together to organize some alternative programming to bolster the convention. A general Japanese Sci-Fi convention (or better yet, an all-Asian genres con) would be a great thing to have, and maybe in the future, G-Con will become that convention.

—Frank Strom



If this isn't the most complete listing of Japan's sci-fi movies and TV shows ever printed in English, then I'll cry. I'm sure there are plenty that got excluded, since let's face it, an absolutely complete review of each and every Japanese sci-fi series & movie ever made is a virtual impossibility. Compiling all these was a real humdinger of a doozey, and I couldn't have done it without immense help from John Auken, August Ragone, Christopher Elam, Jeff Goodhart, Patricia Gonzales, John Ingram, Patrick Macias and Frank Strom.

ADVENTURES OF THE SPACE FAMILY

I've never seen a single episode of this Toei ripoff of LOST IN SPACE. —DF

AGON, THE ATOMIC DRAGON—A B&W, 1960s show from P Productions. Similar to ULTRA Q, but borrowing more heavily from Toho's many giant-monster-on-the-loose films. Agon is another mutant dinosaur resurrected by radiation who terrorizes Japan, in a series of well written,

logically paced half hour episodes not unlike the first Godzilla film (if GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS were chopped into 30-minute segments, it would look a lot like this). Agon doesn't seem inherently evil, however; when shown, he spends more time just standing around than stomping on buildings. He's quieter & less hyper than the average movie monster. Agon's scenes are decent, but at least in the episodes I saw, too much screentime was given to human characters (i.e. a reporter called Goro). With plenty of scientists, reporters and a couple little kids all speaking Japanese, many episodes excel in tedium, but the special effects, though crude at times, are decent. I've yet to see a Japanese monster film or series without fairly good miniatures. **1/2 —Damon Foster

ATRAGON (1963)—Though not all of the miniatures in this Toho flick are entirely convincing and the sea serpent Manda (who debuts here, he'd later come on dry land in DESTROY ALL MONSTERS) looks like a rubber snake dangling from a string,



ATRAGON



ATRAGON is an enjoyable story of the subterranean humans at the lost continent of Mu, so I'll call them "Mumans." Despite their advanced undersea technology, they still carry spears and dress like their Egyptian and/or Polynesian ancestors. This makes destroying them easy (did I forget to mention the entire Mu population is evil?) when the crew of Atragon (a flying submarine) sprays "freeze-gas" all over them. Slow-paced, talky at times, but not actually dull—it's consistently entertaining. Features Tadao Takashima, Yoko Fujiyama, Yu Fujiki, Kenji Sawara, Akemi Kita, Tetsuko Kobayashi, Akihiko Hirata, Eiji Tsuburaya's SPFX, Akira Ifukube's music, Inoshuro Honda's directing, etc. ***
—*Damon Foster*

ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS—Chopped up version of 1969's *GAMERA VS. GUIRON*. Childish beyond belief, about two annoying twerps who voyage into space, dodge braineaters and see Gamera take on knife-headed monster Guiron. This stupid (yet entertaining, I must admit) movie is made all the more intolerable knowing they chopped out the few 'gory' scenes. **
—*Damon Foster*

ATTACK OF THE MUSHROOM PEOPLE—Uniquely written, grim mystery about castaways stranded on an eerie island populated by laughing mushrooms. It's an entertaining Toho drama from 1963 which manages to be an intelligent lesson in psychology and human nature, but it also tosses a few cool-looking mushroom monsters called "Matango" (the flick's original title) our way too! Some may consider it talky or maybe even dull, but I consider it a classic ****
—*Damon Foster*

ATTACK OF THE SUPERMONSTERS—Feature-length, English-dubbed video release of four earlier episodes of the 1970s Japanese TV show *AIZENBORG* from Tsuburaya. Later episodes of the series itself added an Ultraman-ish superhero,

but since the character never appears in this English adaptation, the flick remains sci-fi, and not part of the superhero genre, therefore it applies here. **ATTACK OF THE SUPERMONSTERS** is a ridiculous tale of "evil, bloodthirsty" mutant dinosaurs determined to wipe out mankind using hypnotized dogs, bats & rats. These dinosaurs, including Emperor Tyrannos (who bears a suspicious resemblance to the dinosaur in *THE LAST DINOSAUR*), a stegosaurus, an allosaurus and a teranodon who sounds like Rodan (coincidence or imho?) also happen to speak English, so this camp classic is a must for those who couldn't get enough of the English-speaking monsters of *GODZILLA VS GIGANT*. The good guys are a typical Science Patrol-like squad of futuristic soldiers, jets & other vehicles, but with an interesting twist: all the humans are animated! These cartoons are typical Japanese anime stuff, with decent artwork, but rather jerky animation. The show/movie's high points are traditionally great Tsuburaya SPFX. Miniatures, pyrotechnics and totally cool dinosaurs! It's action packed, and just plain, dumb, brain-in-neutral fun! ***
—*Damon Foster*

BATTLE GIRL—Available photos would indicate this early 1990s independent feature to be along the lines of *ZERAM*. There's also an English subtitled version in the underground called something like *LIVING DEAD AT TOKYO BAY*. Unfortunately, neither version was available for review. —*Damon Foster*

BATTLE IN OUTERSPACE (1959)—Dir: Ishuro Honda. Yet another in Toho's seemingly endless line of flashy space movies. The anti-social aliens are the N-Tal, and they are out to get us. Naturally, we hard-



BATTLE IN OUTERSPACE (1959) Screenshot

headed humans don't go for outsiders musing in on our turf, so we fight back. The usual pyrotechnics ensue. Ryo Ikebe, Kyoko Anzai, Koreya Senda, Yoshio Tsuchiya ***
—*Christopher Elam*

BLUE CHRISTMAS (aka *UFO BLUE CHRISTMAS, BLOOD TYPE BLUE*, and *THE BLUE STIGMA*)—Depressing, rather speculative drama from the mid-1970s about UFO encounters with a weird side effect: Anyone who comes too close to these strange UFOs ends up having blue blood! The emphasis isn't on special effects (there's virtually none), but rather the fear, paranoia and mass hysteria which occurs from bigoted people not wanting contact with those infected with the harmless blue blood syndrome. In one scene, a lady goes to the hospital to find out why her blood (and lips & nipples) are blue, so the corrupt doctors put her to sleep and, unbeknownst to her, they dissect her! Others are murdered by soldiers or rounded up into concentration camps. Grim, disturbing, gloomy, but intriguing. A blatant (and talky) statement against prejudice.

Unfortunately, I don't think there's a subtitled or English dubbed print out on video, but at least ten minutes of it takes place in New York, where there's English dialogue. But unless you can see the subtitled print I saw in a theater in the 1970s, this one will come off as boring and incredibly long **1/2 —*Damon Foster*

BODYSNATCHER FROM HELL (1968)—Director Hajime Sato is Japan's most unmythical hero. This film helps show why. An amazing, claustrophobic gem about wacky airline passengers stranded and fending off a vampiric jelly that turns its reluctant hosts into creepy blood-suckers. Strange and compelling, it's everything that more well-known *ATTACK OF THE MUSHROOM PEOPLE* was, only better! ****
—*Jeff Goodbartz*





ISHIRO HONDA (1911-1993)

Born on March 5th in Yamagata Prefecture, Ishiro (sometimes called "Inoshiro Honda") Honda is best known the world over for his prolific career

specializing in Kaiju Elga starting with GODZILLA in 1954. But even before all of this, he had quite an interesting life—he served as an understudy to famous Japanese director Kajiro Yamamoto (SONGOKU Pts. 1 & 2, 1940) at P.C.L. Studios (later Toho), and was Akira Kurosawa's senior. He served for the Japanese Imperial Army in Manchuria, and leading his platoon, never lost a single man—but ended up as a P.O.W. After the war, upon returning to Japan, Honda passed through Hiroshima, and felt that the end of Mankind was nearing; but this was also the seed in

which Godzilla was sprung into life. At Toho, Honda directed 49 films, 30 of which were SF/Monster related. Upon leaving film directing, he contributed to helming episodes of a number of SF/Superhero teleseries including RETURN OF ULTRAMAN, MIRRORMAN, EMERGENCY CODE: 10-4/10-10, THUNDER MASK, and ZONE: THE HUMAN SHOOTING STAR (aka ZONE FIGHTER). He later was brought in as an assistant director, whose work is evident, on Akira Kurosawa's KAGEMUSHA, RAN, DREAMS, RAPSOY IN AUGUST, and MADADAIYO.

BRAIN 17 (aka REVENGE OF THE DEFENDERS) Completely nutty adaptation of the DAI TETSUJIN 17 series (itself sort of an adaptation of the superhero series JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT) from Toei. Boy meets giant robot, boy uses robot to aid peacekeeping forces against wicked villains, boy loses robot. Bizarre dubbing adds to the camp of BRAIN 17 (Toei, 1977). Dir: Minoru Yamada. With: Masahiro Kamiyama, Tadao Nakamura, Akihiko Hirata. *** *Christopher Elam*

CAPTAIN ULTRA From 1968 came Toei's first live action, sci-fi TV series. I've seen enough episodes to safely say this is one cute show, despite sets & creatures which look like rejects from LOST IN SPACE (but thankfully, CAPTAIN ULTRA never stooped quite so low as to hire common circus performers to play villains). Despite the high camp & cheesy miniatures, charismatic star Hirohisa Nakata manages to maintain a straight face through out, playing the raygun toting, sword wielding Captain Ultra, a space soldier dedicated to protecting the world from aliens called Bandaru ("Bandell"?). They look like retarded Mushroom People, and some of their spaceships resemble common umbrellas, but unintended humor aside, CAPTAIN ULTRA is an exciting, 26-part outerspace fantasy/adventure full of spaceships dogfights, giant monsters, and last and certainly not least, action! Isao Tomita's theme is catchy, and really started to grow on me after a while. ***1/2 *Damon Foster*

CHIBIRA KUN Apparently, a "cute sci-fi" series (Tsuburaya, 1971), which today, might fall somewhere inbetween BARNEY and LIDSVILLE. What few photos I looked at tell me that a few episodes have sort of a "superhero-ish" feel, though most of it is typical kiddie crap along the lines of ROBOCOON. -DF

COMETO SAN ("Dear Comet"? "Comet Lady"? However you choose to translate it, doesn't matter to me) Some cutesy 1968 series about a space lady or whatever, but

DAIGORO
VS. GOLIATH



throw in a stupid looking muppet-creature or two and an animated insert. I've not actually seen it, but it looks pretty stupid. -DF

DAIGORO THE SPACE MONSTER Early 1960s crime drama from Toho, and the monster's (or rather, flying jellyfish/ghost) name is actually "Dogora". Perhaps too talky for some, but entertaining performances by Robert Dunham, Eisei Amamoto & the beautiful Akiko Wakabayashi make it worth watching, and it's probably the most realistic of Japan's giant monster films. *** *Damon Foster*

DAIGORO VS. GOLIATH (Tsuburaya, 1972). Incredibly goofy kiddie movie with monsters. It's dialogue heavy with no available English translation, which seriously hampers my ability to enjoy the antics. I'm not sure I'd like this crazy yarn about a constipated (?) monster anyway, but I guess I'll never know. ** *Christopher Elam*

DESTROY ALL MONSTERS (1968) Aliens, spaceships and mass destruction abounds in this Japanese monster classic (directed by Inoshiro Honda) that has all of our favorite kaiju stomping around the earth's major cities. A personal favorite of mine, DESTROY ALL MONSTERS features some of Toho Studios best looking miniature cities as well as Akira Ifukube's rousing musical score which has never sounded better. But the piece de resistance of DAM is the climactic showdown between King Ghidrah and all of earth's mighty mon-



吉川 進

SUSUMU YOSHIKAWA

KIKKAIDA was the first Toei sci-fi series that Susume Yoshikawa produced, under Tohru Hiriyama (a major founder of Japan's sci-fi heroes). Yoshikawa continued producing superhero programs for many years, up until FIVEMAN.

TAKAYUKI SUZUKI

One of the producers at Toei who took over helming the *Sentai* series starting in 1982, starting with *SUN VULCAN*. After *FIVEMAN*, his partner Susumu Yoshikawa quit and Suzuki took over for many of the superhero programs to follow.

エーリアン



DESTROY ALL MONSTERS

sters led by Godzilla. It doesn't get any better than this! *** *Patricia Gonzales*

DESTROY ALL PLANETS—Japanese title: GAMERA TAI UCHU KAIJU BAIKASU (Daiei, 1968). A typically infantile Gamera movie, but with enough monsters and FX to keep adults amused too. At times it gets pretty damn fun. Irritating boy-scouts help Gamera locate invading "squid-men" from Planet Vitis. Embarrassing yet colorful, and at times, poor Kojiro Hongo looks like he would rather not have been in this one. *** *Damon Foster*

ESPY (aka "ESP Spy"): This is undoubtedly one of my all-time favorite movies. *You've got to be kidding!* For a conflicting view on *ESPY*, see my scab-

bing attack in the previous OC. *DF*! It's a great mixture of espionage and sci-fi. A group of ESP agents code-named *Espy* work to prevent nasty ESP people from causing chaos in the world. My one complaint: The US version has all of the really good parts (bloodshed & nudity) cut out. Look for Robert (DAGORA, GODZILLA VS. MEGALON) Dunham as the airplane captain. **** *Christopher Elam*

FEMALE NEO-NINJAS [?]. Some science fiction, but this is more of a comedy-adventure. The three nini sisters have to protect a scroll of some sort. Lots of silliness and T&A in this endearing little 1991 flick. Too bad all movies aren't this much fun. **** *Christopher Elam*

FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD (Toho, 1965). Dir: Ishiro Honda. Originally intended to be "Frankenstein vs. Godzilla", and it shows. Basically, you have a suspiciously Asian Frankenstein monster laughing like a crazed GERALDO reject while scientists try to figure things out. Later the dinosaur Baragon wrecks havoc and, well, you can guess the rest. *** 1/2 *Christopher Elam*

GAMERA. The groundbreaking Daiei film from 1965. B&W, pretty boring at times, and stupid at others. But it has its moments in a tale of an overgrown, arctic turtle who wrecks havoc in Japan. For more info, see OC's Gamera Issue (#6, 21st edition). 1/2-2 *Damon Foster*

GAMERA, GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE (Daiei, 1995). The beginning & middle are dead slow, the characters are downright uninteresting, and once or twice the new Gyaos looks like a hand puppet. But otherwise, this is an excellent, FX-filled extravaganza! Impressive, high-tech special effects are put to good use toward the end when Gamera and that mutant pteronadon Gyaos finally

FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD



battle it out. On land, in the sky, and briefly even in outer space! Ah yes, it's the thrilling final half-hour when this movie finally lives up to all the hype. What goes on before is a ridiculous mystery about some prophecy from Atlantis, featuring uninspiring performances by Ayako Fujitani, Takeshi Ihara, Akira Onodera, and ZERAM's Yukihiro Hotta. Dir: Shusuke Kaneko, Screenplay: Kazunori Ito. **** *Damon Foster*

KOICHI TAKANO 高野宏一

Born: 1935, Tokyo

He worked in the Special Effects Photography dept. at Toho, and then when Eiji Tsuburaya formed Tsuburaya Productions in 1963, Koichi Takano joined it and became the chief SPFX cameraman on *ULTRA Q*, and then became an FX director on *ULTRAMAN*, and began perfecting his work on *ULTRASEVEN*. He became the main FX director for Tsuburaya productions, and he still works there. He made his directorial debut in 1984 with the feature-length movie *URUTORAMAN MONO GATARI* ("The Ultraman Story"). Perhaps a complete listing of all of

his work would be difficult and time-consuming (and I gotta go tak e a pee!), so I'll just name a few of his other credits: *ULTRA Q: THE MOVIE* (supervisor), *ULTRAMAN TOWARD THE FUTURE* (advisor; trying to make sure the Australians weren't screwing up. For once Takano failed), *ULTRAMAN POWERED: THE ULTIMATE HERO* (some sort of supervising, though I doubt it's proudly displayed on his resume), *GRIDMAN* (an FX director), and is scheduled to be FX director of the hopefully soon-to-be-made *ULTRAMAN NEOS* series. He has also directed video documentaries & other non-sci-fi stuff for Tsuburaya.



GAMERA, SUPER MONSTER- This complete waste of film (Daii 1960) should be called "Gamera, Stupid Monster". The humor is lame, the scenes are unimpaired, and all of Gamera's monster duels are stock footage from other films. The only worthwhile thing are a team of female superheroes, but even they don't save this

cheap, embarrassing movie * -*Damon Foster*

GAMERA THE INVINCIBLE- An alternate edit of 1965's GAMERA, and although all footage of Gamera is the same as in the 1965 film, this one offers humor, courtesy of American inserts. ** -*Damon Foster*

GAMERA VS. BARUGON- Also known as WAR OF THE MONSTERS, depending on which version of this Gamera classic (Daii, 1966) you see. The highest budgeted Gamera movie of the 1960s, and the least childish. There are intelligent characters and the script is logical & coherent for once! Easily my favorite Gamera tale, tying with GAMERA GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE. New Guinean islanders prophetic that some weird mutant alligator called Barugon will wreck havoc, and that he does, until Gamera drowns him. **** -*Damon Foster*

GAMERA VS. GUIRON- This one was actually the same movie as ATTACK OF THE MONSTERS, but this is an alternate English dubbing (supplied by Sunday Frank), and it's unclear. So when the monsters are battling, we get to see a decapitation and chopped off foot. Otherwise, it's still just a childish fantasy, but not a bad way to spend an afternoon. ** -*Damon Foster*

GAMERA VS. GYAOS (aka RETURN OF THE GIANT MONSTERS, GAMERA TAI GYAOS, GAMERA VS. GAOS, etc.) Watchable though disappointing follow up to GAMERA VS. BARUGON. Gyaos is a volcanic bird who terrorizes bickering construction workers until Gamera finally yanks him into a volcano. *** -*Damon Foster*

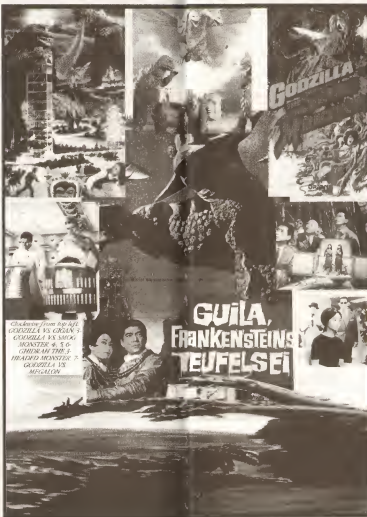
GAMERA VS. MONSTER X This 1970 film was originally called GAMERA VS. JIGER, but under any name, it's yet another kiddy fantasy which supplies unintended humor for us old farts. This week, the obligatory obnoxious brats see Gamera protect Expo 70 from some mutant triceratops (described by the natives of Wester Island) called Jiger. *** -*D. Foster*

GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS (aka "Gojira," 1954) The debut film of the jolly green kaiju. GODZILLA stands out as Toho Studios's crowning achievement, setting the standard for all Japanese giant monster movies to come. American journalist Steve Martin (Raymond Burr) narrates the mass destruction inflicted on Tokyo by Godzilla, the fire-breathing nightmare mutated after being exposed to radiation from U.S. atomic bomb testing. If there's anybody out there that hasn't seen this classic thriller as many times as it's been mentioned in OC, what the heck is your excuse? Pick

up your butt and go rent it already! **** -*Patricia Gonzales*

GODZILLA 1985- A long-awaited, over hyped, disappointing, and bewildering

exciting, is now like a straight jacket of predictable sights and events. Plus, it's got the lamest ending of any Godzilla film, he falls into a volcano! The American version, with Raymond Burr again, ably



failure. Insult to injury. It's boring too. It's practically Kaiju-dom's own STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE. The standard Godzilla-on-the-loose scenario, once

demonstrates Dr. Pepper's widespread use in the military community. ** -*Patricia Macias*

GODZILLA'S REVENGE (1969) This film poses a major dilemma for the serious student of Godzilla films. Is this, the 10th entry in the series, a shameless stock footage feeding frenzy of criminal propositions, or is it director Ishiro Honda's scathing critique of the urban environment of post-war Japan? Yeah, right. Beat up every day of his damn life, young Ichiro dreams about going to Monster Island where he and Minya help each other overcome their respective insecurities. Ichiro's newfound sense of self-empowerment and knack for violence comes in handy when he's kidnapped by a couple of bumbling yakuza. The moral denouncement of the film (if you are tired of getting beat up by bullies all the time, why not become one yourself?), smacks of hypocrisy and cynicism, leaving a sting on the viewer to let for months to come. Perhaps this is the "Revenge" that the title refers to. Minya's resemblance to Gary (DIFFERENT STROKES) Coleman is uncanny. ** -*Patricia Macias*

GODZILLA VS. BILLOANTE (1989) A "respectable" Godzilla movie to take home to mom & dad, the tale of the great one's return from the depths of Mount Mihara to do battle with the offspring from a genetic splice of rose, a mad scientist's daughter, and Godzilla's very own hyde, the remarkable Billoante. Writer/director Kazuki Ohashi's detachment from the Toho formula makes for a fresh perspective, and FX man Kawakita performs a miracle in restoring all of Godzilla's "bad guy" dignity. It's no masterpiece but rather a bit flawed, leap forward in the right direction. A Godzilla movie for people who don't like Godzilla movies. ** -*Patricia Macias*

GODZILLA VS. GIGAN (1972) Like a crazy old grandmother locked away in an attic, this Godzilla movie (along with GODZILLA VS. MEGALON) was meant to be forgotten, but it just refuses to go away. It pops up on TV practically every week. Space roaches build an amusement park/death trap designed to kill Godzilla. Ghidorah, Gigan and Angilas show up also, to collect royalties on stock footage. Needless to say, they cash in. The scenes of Godzilla and Angilas "talking" are calculated to heighten your discomfort and confusion. * -*Patricia Macias*

GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDRAH Godzilla is mythical, heroic and the ultimate threat in this almost perfect 1991 film. Future people want to erase Godzilla and Japan's prosperity from time and this movie erases the disappointing memories of GODZILLA 1985 and GODZILLA VS. BILLOANTE. It has far too high an opinion for Japan's future and the android's

TOHRU HIRIYAMA

By now you probably know this guy has produced (or been Creative Consultant at least) damn near everything Toei has ever done in the superhero & sci-fi genre. The earliest Tohru Hiriyaama credit we could find was in 1966's AKUMA KUN (LIT Devil) is its closest English equivalent, though mistranslations like "Little Devil" and "Devil Boy" are inevitable), a fantasy TV show. Tohru Hiriyaama went on to do JOHNNY SOKKO AND HIS FLYING ROBOT (which starred Mitsunobu Kaneko, who also starred in AKUMA KUN), though the story was originally drafted by Mitsunobu Yokoyama (who in turn created GIGANTOR). As in GIGANTOR, Mitsunobu Yokoyama's original idea was for a middle-controlled Giant Robot fight giant robots, but it was Hiriyaama's idea to make a movie of the villains giant monsters instead. This was an idea he took from CAPTAIN ULTRA, which he also produced, a year before. He's also the guy who pushed KAMEN RIDER and the many action hero programs which followed it. But in the late 1970s, when the toy companies began having more creative input & control on these shows than the directors, writers & producers, Tohru Hiriyaama left, understandably. One of the last sci-fi programs he was involved in was SPIDERMAN. He didn't actually leave Toei, he continued working on programs (i.e. ROBOCOON-style fantasies; the closest American equivalent being SIGMUND & THE SEA MONSTERS and all that old Sid & Marty Kroft crap).

平山亨



金城哲夫

TETSUO KINJO

A screenwriter who tried to break into the movie & TV business in Tokyo, he was Okinawan, and prejudice exists on all corners of the globe. At first it seemed about as possible as a black guy getting a job in a Korean grocery store, but fortunately for Tetsuo Kinjo, Eiji's Tsuburaya Productions was an unusual, unconventional company. Tsuburaya hired all kinds of creative people with visions & potential, and was unconcerned with background, politics, etc. So a lot of misfits who didn't get along with studio systems & egotistical producers who just wanted a buck (I mean, a yen) all joined them radical innovators at Tsuburaya Productions and got the last laugh. Kinjo made quite an impact, writing a number of scripts for ULTRA Q, ULTRAMAN and ULTRASEVEN. In fact, there was a little joke in the so-called ULTRASEVEN in that one of the villains was named after him: King Joe is based on Kinjo! He also became a prolific director, and one of his last scripts was used in the 11th episode of RETURN OF ULTRAMAN. Unfortunately, he passed away prematurely in 1970, while still writing what would be his only script for RETURN OF ULTRAMAN. He never lived to see the completed episode.



scenes are beneath contempt, but they're small prices to pay for some of the best monster battles of the series. Best line: "Perfect." The pathetic actor playing the android can't even deliver this line. ***
John Ingram

GODZILLA VS. MEGALON: This 1973 film is short on Godzilla as it introduces the robot Jet Jaguar. Lot's of stock footage from earlier films gives this movie a déjà-vu quality for faithful watchers. But still, it does have some great fights between the principal reasons to watch this movie: Godzilla, Gigan, Jet Jaguar and Megalon. Once again, ignore the plot. The Sentopians are pissed about the upper world experiments with nuclear weapons so they send Megalon to deal with it, etc. Great giant monster fights give this three stars. *** *John Auber*

GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA (1992): It's cut & paste, a pastiche of the original MOTHRA, GODZILLA VS. THE THING, and my god- RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK? Of course it's beautiful, exciting, and will satisfy any G-fan's general nutritional requirements, but it's also a lot like eating left overs. Elii & Honda did it better. **1/2 - *Patrick Macias*

GODZILLA VS. THE SEA MONSTER: Inane '60s beach movies meet third-rate Jules Verne in this meandering flick. After losing a dance marathon, three idiots team up with a cool thief and a slave girl to stop undefined villains from making atom bombs. It takes 50 minutes before Godzilla, Mothra and other monsters clash, but the monster battle scenes are exciting. Best line: "Since we woke up Godzilla, I forgot all about the soldiers." -Idiot
**1/2 *John Ingram*

GODZILLA VS. SPACE GODZILLA: Didn't want to see this one (Toho, 1994) at first because of all the bad publicity. When I finally played the damn tape (months later) I was happily surprised.

While it's hardly the best in the series, it's also far from one of the worst. Strangely, Space Godzilla's origin is still a bit of a mystery. Even the subtitled print I eventually got regards to 'mutated Biollante' theory as merely a possibility.
***1/2 *Jeff Goodbarts*

GORATH (Toho, 1962): Oh no! A runaway planet is going to collide with Earth! That's the premise here. About average for a Japanese space movie, even though it's just as much a disaster epic. A must-see for all Kumi Mizuno fanboys. Also starring: Ryo Ikebe, Yumi Shirakawa and Kumi Mizuno. *** - *Christopher Elam*

GREEN SLIME: Correct me if I'm wrong, but isn't this Toei outerspace adventure (1969) considered a "Golden Turkey", "One of the 50 Worst Films of All Time", or at least an unintended comedy or just plain stupid film? If so, just what kind of blind, deaf morons said this? GREEN SLIME is a well made, entertaining movie which I saw as a matinee in the 1970s, as a co-feature to SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER, and the audience (mostly kids, but all ages were there) applauded wildly for GREEN SLIME; everyone loved it, and it was much more well received than the Sinbad flick. GREEN SLIME is an action-oriented movie about astronauts in space stalked by space monsters, and is more exciting than all them grim, gross, depressing ALIEN films combined! Possibly influenced by the first episode of CAPTAIN ULTRA, it features Joseph Cotton, Richard Jaeckel, Luciana Paluzzi, Robert Dunham, Linda Miller, a truly cool & slick theme song, nice direction by then Toei president Kinji Fukasaku, and fairly good SFX by Akira Watanabe & Yukio Maroda! Filmed entirely at Toei Studios (Tokyo), despite its all caucasian cast, *** - *Damon Foster*

GUNHEAD (1989): An evil, egocentric computer has taken over an island in the South Pacific, and it's up to a crack team of techno-mercenaries to reclaim the heap of dirt with the aid of Gunhead, an anthropomorphic transformable mecha. Koichi Kawakami's effects and the industrial strength design are swell, but so what? It's just a bunch of robots endlessly fighting each other. Without much help from a story or script, it's like the poor man's James Cameron. What was that Shakespeare said about "Sound and fury, signifying nothing?" Making the trip bearable is super sexy actress Brenda Bakke, who can eat nachos with me anytime. **1/2 - *Patrick Macias*

HALF-HUMAN: Dir. Ishiro Honda & Kenneth G. Crane. Scientist Carradine explains every minute detail of this Toho yeti movie. The US inserts scenes aren't really that bad, but they aren't especially good either. Akemi Negishi steals the movie (Toho, 1955), and John Carradine, Akira Takarada, and Momoko Kouchi also star. Special Effects Eiji Tsuburaya **1/2 - *Christopher Elam*

H-MAN, THE: In the early 1960s, thanks to Eiji Tsuburaya's cool special effects & Masaru Sato's catchy theme music, Toho came out with this atmospheric successor to our own THE BLOB. Though THE H-MAN features the most uninteresting car chase ever seen, this is a slick film about yakuzas (one is played by Makoto Sato) pursued by both the police and ghostly, radio-active mutants referred to (appropri-





NORIUSHI IKEYA

Born: 1949

In 1966, he joined as an FX Art Dir. Assist. to Tooru Narita on *ULTRAMAN*, and became a co-designer for many monsters in *ULTRASEVEN*. Other credits of Noriushi Ikeya included *KAIKI DAI SAKUSEN*, *RETURN OF ULTRAMAN* (designed all the monsters), *SILVER KAMEN* (main designer), *IRON KING* (main designer; designing the hero and the monsters), *DAI GORO VS. GOLIATH*, *FIREMAN*, *KOSEIDEN*, *ULTRA Q: THE MOVIE*, and the "T cito Mono Getari" movies (i.e. *TOKYO BABYLON* & *LAST MEGOPOLIS*).

ately) as "liquid creatures" by scientists like Kenji Sahara and detectives like Akhiko Hirata. Talky and slow-paced at parts, but some scenes of the Hi-Men are



erie, there are hot babes in the nightclub scenes, and watch for excellent miniatures of burning buildings toward the finale, when scientists use fire to destroy the monsters *** -*Damon Foster*

HUMAN VAPOR—A bit more slow-paced than standard for Toho fare. It's more of a character study than anything else. Yoshio Tsuchiya cements his reputation for playing tortured souls with the Vapor Man. 1960. Dir: Ishuro Honda, Star: Yushio Tsuchiya, Kaoru Yachigusa, Tatsuya Mihashi, Keiko Sato. *** -*Christopher Elam*

KAJU BUSKA—Produced by Tsuburaya (1967), broadcast on Nihon TV (11/9/67-9/27/68), but otherwise, little is known of this hard to find series. I've not seen it, but I'll tell you one thing: if you like sci-fi about buck-toothed teddy bears with antennas, you ain't lived until you've seen this 47-chapter kiddy series. -*DF*

KAJU MARIN KONGU ("Monster Marine Kong")—A hard to find, B&W, 14-part series from Nisan Productions, lasting from 4/3/61 to 9/25/62. Scant photos indicate it's about a cute, reptilian, giant monster called Marine Kong who's controlled by humans, much like a robot. Not available for review, not yet anyway. -*DF*

KAJU OUIJI ("Monster Prince")—Unfortunately, I've only seen the 14th episode of this program (P Productions, 1968) originally broadcast on Fuji TV, but it was excellent, exciting and action packed! Akira Yamaguchi appears in this outstanding program about a boomerang-wielding caveboy and his friendly (except to evil giant monsters who cause trouble, that is!) brontosaurus! They're both assisting a Japanese army in defending Earth against attack by space aliens called "Choujin's". Though the villains look like a low budget cross between vampires and Peter Pan, the 26-episode program is big fun; full of giant dinosaurs, gunplay, swordplay, and probably other types of action—I'm dying to see more episodes! **** -*Damon Foster*

KAIKI DAI SAKUSEN ("Operation Mystery")—The unbelievably dull episode ("25") I saw of this talky drama had Shin Kishida and Shoji Kobayashi investigating some mysterious lady that Kishida seems to have a crush on. It also has something to do with magical Buddha statues, but this rather adult soap opera is useless unless your Japanese is fluent. -*Damon Foster*

KING KONG ESCAPES—Mad scientist Dr. Who (not that one) creates the robotic Mechani Kong and later kidnaps the real deal, all in his quest to mine a rare element. Biggest liability: That terrible voice the Americans dubbed for Linda Miller. ***1/2 -*Christopher Elam*

KING KONG VS. GODZILLA (1963)—Let's face it, this Toho classic from their golden age of monsterific movies rocks harder than Electric Funeral by Black Sabbath (okay, maybe just the original Japanese version). Plus, it's the only King Kong movie where the great ape is a drug addict. It all begins when Godzilla pops up jack-in-the-box-style out of an iceberg, inspiring the sponsors of a low rated TV show to try and find their own monster to draw in viewers. Kong is found on a Pacific island and, after a fix of narcotic berry juice, he is knocked out and taken

back to Japan for the "fight of the century". It's another Toho exodus from Honda, Ifukube, and the rest of the gang. *** -*Patrick Macias*

KINKYU SHIRE 10-4, 10-10 ("Emergency Command 10-4-10-10," aka "Emergency Rescue 10-4-10-10")—An immensely exciting, 26-part series (Tsuburaya; 1972) about a team not unlike those in the later Ultra programs, except that they lack a superhero (they're all humans), and any space-ships or fancy arsenal; they work out of a normal office, despite the usual post-Science Patrol helmets and uniforms! Each episode has this task force tackling another type of supernatural menace, some are monsters (all shapes & sizes), some are humans with special powers or gadgets, and some are just plain weird! One episode involved a space-vampire lady (called simply, "Invader"), pictured on this issue's cover. A few episodes have our heroic squad of acrobatic dogooders tangling with normal human criminals. Though only available in Japanese, the stories, characters & situations are all quite interesting, and the special effects & fist-fights make this one-of-a-kind series excellent entertainment. Shunsuke Ikeda (later of KIKAI DA 01) stars as Ipei, one of the squad members in this great, fun program! **** -*Damon Foster*

KOSOKU ESUPA ("Speed-Light Esper")—Boring, childish at times A 1960s TV show that can be described as "Johnny Sokko



in Space", "Gam without Goidar", or even "Astroboy meets Flash Gordon". One of the flying kids is protecting Japan from aliens who look like rotten carrots that constantly sway back and forth. A few FX are amusing, but others are cheap. The heroic space kiddy is played by a young Kiyotaka Mitsuig, who would later grow up to star in SHIROSHI KAMEN ("White Lion Mask") and would be a regular in ULTRAMAN TARO. *-Damon Foster*

KUJIRA KAMI ("Whale God"): Not really a sci-fi film (Daiji, 1962), but its FX make it a must-see (or rather "should-see"), or how about "might-as-well-see," or perhaps "I suppose you might want to check it out on a rainy day," or better yet "there's no harm in watching just the beginning-and-ending" for genre fans. While the miniature and not-so-miniature models of the whale are great, I myself can't take seriously any film where Japanese are the heroes and a whale is the villain! Let's get real here, are whales driving Japanese into extinction? Are whales (asholes) an endangered species (I wish)? I kept rooting for the poor, innocent whale and cheered every time he called a hunter! I have no sympathy for the small village of whalers, and question Shintaro Katsu's character's charisma; he's a bully and in one scene he rapes a woman! And he's suppose to be a hero? This movie won't score points with feminists or Green Peace, that's for damn sure. When the fishermen roop, I forget! Whales are mammals, that makes the protagonists "mammalermen," not fishermen of the old style village aren't fighting among themselves (and emitting typically annoying Japanese grunts through out which make them sound like drunken neanderthals), they're talking (if you can call it that) endlessly as this B&W drama bored me to tears. Also features Kojiro

Hongo and Takashi Shimura. * *-Damon Foster*

KUREKURE TACORA: Possibly Toho's most infantile sci-fi series of the 1970s. I've not seen it (and I'm not particularly anxious to), but it looks like a live action version of SQUIDLE DIDDLEY, minus the sailor's hat. *-DF*

LADY BATTLECOOP (Toei, 1991): ROBOCOOP aped Toei's Space Sheriff, so Toei turned around and ripped off the ripoff in this direct-to-video effort. The only real difference is that the cyborg is female. Otherwise, it's fairly predictable "I'll get revenge on the dirty stinkers who made me this iron-plated superhero" story. My version has English subtitles, so I was able to stay reasonably involved. It's still not very interesting or exciting. *1/2 - Christopher Elam*

LAST DAYS OF PLANET EARTH: Whether you know it as CATASTROPHIC 1999, THE END OF THE WORLD, PROPHECIES OF NOSTRADAMUS, or NOSTRADAMUS NO DAYOGEN, this 1975 Toho thriller is the most insightful, if not simply the best disaster movie ever made! Eerie, speculative, provocative, and with a brilliant performance by Tetsuro Tanabe. Documentary-like at times, artsy-fartsy at others, but with continuing characters (and interesting ones to boot), and an entertaining chronicle of pollution, famine, disease, and other manmade disasters. Enjoyable yet depressing, featuring mutant kids, giant slugs & bats (with visual suspension wires, one of the few flawed effects), and superb miniatures & explosions. Isao Tomita's music is hauntingly appropriate in this doomsday thriller. The only time I ever saw it uncut was in Japanese, I doubt highly there's an American TV print which maintains

Kaoru Yum's breast shot, not to mention the blood & gore shots on New Genaia, when scientists are attacked by mutant cannibals. **** -Damon Foster*

LAST WAR, THE: Obviously a well made film (Toho 1961), but that doesn't mean I have to like it. I've never cared for nuclear war movies and this one was no excep-



tion. Akira Takarada and Yumi Shirakawa are first rate, and Eiji Tsuburaya's FX are marvelous. I just think the whole thing is too depressing to be entertaining. *** -Christopher Elam*

LATITUDE ZERO: Excitement abounds in this fast-paced adventure (Toho, 1969). Scientists are rescued by a submarine



from a utopian civilization and help save the world from a megalomaniac (no, not Damon Roster). Some of the effects look a little rushed, but it doesn't damage the movie. Notable as the only Toho sci-fi film released to America with no dubbing at all (it was all filmed in English). Dir. Ishiro Honda. Starring Joseph Cotton, Cesar Romero, Richard Jaeckel, Akira Takarada, Masumi Okada. ****1/2 - Christopher Elam*

LEGEND OF THE DINOSAURS (1977): It's hard to completely trash a Japanese monster movie because even the very worst of them seem to have something imaginative or commendable about them. Not the case here. This piece of crap from Toei makes THE LAST DINOSAUR look like CITIZEN KANE. The story is about a couple of prehistoric creatures, a pterodactyl and a plesiosaur, who are eating people in a village located at the base of Mt. Fuji. The monsters suck, it's scientifically and historically inept (what's this bullshit about Ben Franklin and a prehistoric toad?), production values are non-existent, and it's about as entertaining as a box of rocks. No mistake. This is the heart of darkness, the 9th circle of hell for the genre. *-Patrick Macias*

MAGIC CLASS: Machiko Soga in a rare heroic role in this Toei show about a witch who takes kids on some wacky adventures riding what looks like either a flying saucer or giant hat. No other info is available, and I can't see the series, just photos. *-DF*

MESSAGE FROM SPACE: NOT STAR WARS, but an incredible simulation. Actually this is a colorful variation (Toei, 1978) on the standard plot of a small band of heroes fighting an evil empire. It's a

fine effort in its own right, but Toei didn't have to be so obvious about their source of inspiration. Prince Hans? Meia? Give me a break! Dir. Kinji Fukasaku. Starring Fuyumi Matsuyama, Sonny Chiba, Hiroyuki Sanada, Peggy Lee Brennan, Eisaku Shiohara, Tetsuro Tanaka & Makoto Sato. *** -Christopher Elam*

MESSAGE FROM SPACE The TV series. Actually called UCHU-KARA NO MESSEI GINGA TAISEN ("Message From Space: Galactic Battle"), this 27-episode series (Toei, 1978) seems more like a superhero series than the actual movie it's based on. It's alive with miniature spaceships, pyrotechnics, gaudy costumes, singer Isao Sasaki's golden voice, swordplay, bloodless stabbings, acrobatics & martial arts. Our heroes are Hayato (Hiroyuki Sanada), presumably a descendant of the movie's Shiro (also Sanada), Ryu, a robot called Tonto, and a low budget space-sensationalist (wooden no coincidence) called Bara. They're a charismatic team who play well off each other; their male bonding would make John Woo envious, and this camaraderie is lacking in later "Sentai" clones to follow. Another supporting character is the mysterious space lady (in an obvious blind spot called Sophia who always seems to rescue them when all else fails. The course of the show has them continuing the fight against the Gavanas, including sexy female villain Kuno, a master of disguise. The heavy dialogue didn't do me much good being all in Japanese, but here's what I got out of the episodes I've seen. ***1/2* Our hottest disrupter a slave labor camp so the Gavanas unleash a hypnotic one-eyed villain who pits hero against hero. ***6* Gavanas terrorize some orphans so Ryu infiltrates their nearby base, only to get captured. *1/2* ***7* Hayato, Ryu & Bara aid Jillican rebels (lead by Tetsuro Sakaguchi) in wiping out another

成田亨



HEITARU MARITA
Born 1929
In 1954 Mr. Marita joined Toho's Art Dept. and actively

worked on the films GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER, MADAME WHITEWAVE, HIPHOP TANGO, and a total of 13 special effects movies for Toho. In the late 1950s, he joined Shochiku and worked on several of their flicks, and in the 1960s he did some work for Toei (where he was FX Art Dir. for Chiba's INVASION OF THE NEPTUNE MEN; he designed the film's spaceships & costumes), worked on the NATIONAL KID TV show, and at least 40 other Toei productions. If that's not enough, he joined Tsuburaya Productions in 1965, where he worked as a main monster designer for ULTRA-G, ULTRAMAN, ULTRASEVEN, & WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS. Other credits to his name include the miniatures in MIGHTY JACK, superhero characters in FLYING SAUCER WAR, SAKURAI & TOGELI

HYUMAM (a live stage-show program from the mid-1970s). He still designs characters today, several of which were remade for ULTRAMAN POWERED: THE ULTIMATE HERO (for what it's worth).



KEITA ANAMIYA

This Amamiya guy started off as a designer, he did film flicks when he was a kid (he's about 33 years old today) and won a lot of awards. He also did a series of drawings & comics (in Uchusen magazine) based on the further adventures of Annie, the character from SPACE SHERIFF SHOOTER. This got his foot in the door, enabling him to get jobs (if you see "freeze frame" art, as in flashbacks in mid-to-late 1980s sci-fi TV shows, chances are, Keita Amamiya is the artist) illustrating for JUSPION and JETMAN, replacing Ryu Noguchi (who did paintings for older programs like DENZIMAN, BATTLE FEVER J, SHARIYAN, & SHIDER).



Keita Amamiya's pre-eminence was further established when he tried his hand at directing a 70-min. film (shown at the 1988 Tokyo International Film Festival) for a game company called Namco, called MIRAI NINJA ("Cyber Ninja", in America). It was a hit, so today, Keita Amamiya is a contemporary new wave anime director, known for such trendy films as ZERAM, ZERAM 2, KAMEN RIDERS ZO and J, HAKAIDA: MECHANICAL VIOLATOR, and hopefully next year's thrice thrice featurette HENSHIN NINJA. ARASHI (a remake of the early 1970s series), scheduled for release in March, 1990. He's one of the bright young hopes of Japanese filmmaking.



RYU NOGUCHI

Born: 1944

Ryu Noguchi was a student of Shōtarō Ishimori in 1970. He has a very unique, eccentric taste, and his designs included all the main robots (including the hero) in *SUPER ROBOT: RED BARON*. The same goes for *ZA KAGE STA* ("The Shadow Star"), *AIZENBORG*, and villainous monsters of *BATTLE FEVER*, *DENZIMAN*, *SPACE SHERIFFS*, *SHARIYAN*, *SHIDER*, and *JUSPIN*. He currently still works for Toei occasionally, designing monsters for *JETMAN*, etc. He also released an art book in 1985, featuring enough of his art to demonstrate what a weird guy he is.

Kazuho Mitsuata, Japan's first woman sci-fi director with *ULTRA SEVEN*'s cast



KAZUHO MITSUTA

Born: 1937, Nagasaki

Kazuho joined Tsuburaya Productions in 1965, where he became an assistant director at *ULTRA Q*. He also directed the 10th episode of *ULTRAMAN* (written by Tetsuo Kinjo). Mitsuta went on to prominent fame being the main director for *ULTRA SEVEN*, and was at some time involved in *RETURN OF ULTRAMAN*, *MEGALOMAN*, and plenty others. He's no longer a director, but is now one of Tsuburaya's producers, and one of the individuals who influenced Japanese sci-fi TV significantly.

Gavana slave-labor camp, resulting in numerous confrontations with the new Gavana warrior: A rock monster. An exciting episode." *8" Poor Bar! He gets drugged & captured, his brother murdered and his nephew Jiru is kidnapped by a talking tree! But decent action and hilariously bad ape masks (the staple of the series) make this chapter watchable." *9" The skeleton/bat monster is cool, but the episode gets off to a painfully slow start (and middle)." *10" A walking piece of seaweed kidnaps a scientist (instead of his daughter!) to force him to repair a Gavana spaceship carrying an atomic bomb." *11/2 *13" Bar overreacts (and overacts) because his old wrestling chum Pao is helping the Gavanas locate some rare gold statue." *1/2 *14" The miniature of a flying bat/ninja looks nothing like the character's costumed form in this otherwise standard tale of Gavanas hassling an old ninja & his granddaughter on Planet Shida." *15" Hayato must transport a serum/cure in a brief-case to relieve villagers of some plague, all the while dodging Gavana attacks." *16" The episodic guest villain is a sultry spider/ninja woman who kidnaps a girl in this enjoyable episode." *1/2 - *Damon Foster*

MIGHTY JACK No monsters at all in this spy actioner from the house that built *Ultraman*, but it's still quite interesting. The biggest problem in this feature-length English video is the abrupt shift from the

show's first episode, to the last episode. I'm not complaining, though. Dir. Kazuho Mitsuata, 1968. Masanari Nabei, Hideaki Naito, Naoko Koba, Hiroshi Ninami. *** - *Christopher Elam*

MONSTER FROM A PREHISTORIC PLANET [aka *GAPPA THE TRIPHIBIAN MONSTER*] Average for a 1960s monster movie. It holds the dubious distinction of being a Godzilla imitator that rips off another Godzilla imitator (Britain's *GORGOL*). A big reptile is discovered on an island and brought back to civilization. This makes the reptile's even bigger parents very pissed off, so they cause lots of trouble for dumb humans. Starring, 1967, Dir. Haruyasu Noguchi, Shinnig, Tamio Kawai, Yoko Yamamoto, Kōkan Katsura, Keisuke Yukioka. *1/2 - *Christopher Elam*



MONSTER ZERO (aka *GODZILLA VS. MONSTER ZERO*) In this one, Planet X's naughty people ask Earth to hand over Godzilla and Rodan. Big G, Rodan and King Ghidorah lack enough screen time in this dressed rehearsal for *DESTROY ALL MONSTERS*. Luckily, a strong plot (take note, Tim Burton) and slick, Devo-style aliens provide a fun movie. Best line: "We'll escape into the future, into that dimension we've never seen." - Dying alien. *** - *John Ingram*

MOTHR Everyone knows this one (Toho, 1961) is great. It's the heart warming tale of two attractive tiny fairies (Emi & Yumi Ito, The Peanuts) who are kidnapped by an evil caucasian (played by Eurasian Jerry Ito) and taken to Tokyo. Their big bug guardian comes from infant Island, to their rescue. Frankie Sakai, Kyoko Kagawa, Hiroshi Koizumi. ****1/2 - *Christopher Elam*

MYSTERIANS, THE- Once considered a classic, the years (and critics) have not been kind to this Toho movie. I still think it's worthwhile. The miniatures and cos-



times are awesome and the story has been ripped off countless times. I'm fairly certain this was the first flick to feature aliens looking to knock up Earth women. Besides, what other movie can you watch to see Yumi Shirakawa take a bath? Dir.: Ishiro Honda; Toho/1957. Kenji Sahara, Yumi Shirakawa, Akihiko Hirata, Momoko Ochi. *** -Christopher Elam

NIJO OTOKO—Well acted & coherently paced, but otherwise this crude, cheap B&W Daiei (1949) stinker is just a boring, talky waste of time! There are a few full color inserts of animated rainbows sprinkled throughout, but don't ask me why! Also, don't ask me why the sound suddenly drops out each time these full color shots are tossed in (apparently at random; for some artsy fartsy affect). Because there are no translated versions of this absolutely unwatchable mystery/who-dunnit/suspense drama, I'm only guessing it's about a guy who kills people using hypnosis, and later a knife. NIJO OTOKO is complete and utter crap! -Damon Foster

RETURN OF THE DINOSAURS—I couldn't finish this mixture of cartoon humans and live FX work. It's nowhere near as watchable as its predecessor ATTACK OF THE SUPER MONSTERS. This one is edited from episodes of BORN FREE (another live action & animated program about dinosaurs), which apparently became much different later in its run. 1/2 -Christopher Elam

RODAN (1956)—RODAN ("Radon" in Japanese), Toho Studios's first color kaiju film, still holds up today as a giant monster movie masterpiece. Second only to GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS, RODAN showcases some of Eiji Tsuburaya's finest work. The Rodan costume is beautifully sculpted, far superior to ones used in future films (including the new one in GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA). The prehistoric insects were also well done and quite hor-

rific. The fact that Rodan doesn't appear until the middle of the movie adds further suspense, making the movie a must see for any fans of Japanese kaiju. Dir.: Inoshiro Honda, Prod.: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Starring: Kenji Sahara & Yumi Shirakawa. *** -Patricia Gonzalez

SAYONARA JUPITOR (1983)—This has got to be the most overblown & bloated Toho SPX movie of all time. You'll want to see it anyway, if only because the visuals are probably the best the studio has ever produced. The story tells of a young scientist named Eiji Honda (get it?) who leads a project that's going to turn the planet Jupiter into a sun, a concept that predates the even more overcooked 2010. Attempting to sabotage this grand scheme is an alien life form called "the Jupiter Ghost" and a weird back-to-nature cult who worship a dolphin. The 140 minute running time manages to squeeze blatant ripoffs and hammy homages to nearly every sci-fi flick made after 2001. I wouldn't exactly call this an "overlooked classic", but it's a major chapter in the Toho saga that shouldn't be ignored. **1/2

-Patrick Macias

SHUTO SHOSHITSU ("Capitol City's Disappearance", aka "Tokyo Black Out")—Dreadfully boring soap opera about a mysterious, ominous black cloud which causes a disaster or two. When actually shown, there are some honestly beautiful special effects, but because of excessive characters & dialogue (no translation, except for the obligatory bad acting Americans; but their screentime is rather small), SHUTO SHOSHITSU is an absolutely unwatchable, incredibly dull (and long) stinker that Daiei so mercilessly inflicted upon the world in 1987, the bastards. Tetsuro Tanba has a supporting role in this motionless picture, and looks almost as bored as the audience. -Damon Foster

STARFLEET—This far-from-interesting TV show is the English dubbing (broadcast weekly or daily in England, but to the best of my knowledge, no American TV stations have aired any episodes, though I hear certain episodes were combined to form a feature-length video release, or two) of Japan's equally dull TV show, X-BOMBER. Whether you've watched it as X-BOMBER or STARFLEET, its inspiration is obviously the sci-fi puppet shows of Britain, like CAPTAIN SCARLET, STINGRAY, and THUNDERBIRDS. In this English version, the villains now have unintelligible Nazi accents, and characters have names like Hagen, John Lee and Barrie Hercules. Worst of all is that the whole Japanese score (grinding electric guitars

田中友幸



TOMUYUKI TANAKA

One of the Three Founders of Japanese Monsterdom, part of the "Golden Trio" which included Honda and Tsuburaya. But since Tomoyuki Tanaka wasn't behind the camera or making a rubber monster suit, not a lot of people are interested in this father of Japanese sci-fi. Tanaka was born around 1910, and started out as an actor in stage plays doing drama at his university. He moved on to be a stage director then producer, and of course moved into filmwork. While trying to make a co-production between Indonesia & Japan called IN THE SHADOW OF GLORY, the movie's would-be star Ryo Ikebe couldn't get a work visa so the whole film had to be cancelled. Knowing it was his make-or-break situation, he thought of a sure-fire hit on a nervous plane flight back to Tokyo: A Japanese monster movie! One of the biggest hits in Japan in 1953 was the American film THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS, so he came up quickly with a similar idea of his own tentatively called something like "The Monster From Twenty Thousand Miles Beneath the Sea". He approached Iwao Mori, and after several meetings with other movie moguls, the idea for GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS was agreed upon and developed. Ever since, good old Tomoyuki Tanaka has been the main guy who's been pushing to keep the Godzilla movies coming. He eventually got promoted to be Toho's president from the mid-1970s until 1985 when he retired (though would still be a driving force behind Toho's monster films). Had Tanaka ever completely dropped out of the Godzilla business, we probably would never have seen the revival in the series which started with GODZILLA 1985, let alone the films which lead up to 1975. He's actually only in semi-retirement, his name always seems to appear in the credits for even the most recent Godzilla movies!



RODAN

and kick ass rock) has been removed in favor of lame-ass pop & synth trash. * - *Damon Foster*

SUBMERSION OF JAPAN- Slow, ponderous and way too talky for my taste. The premise of this disaster film (Toho, 1973), though, is interesting, even fascinating and the way the characters dealt with the situation kept me more-or-less awake through most of it. Hell, at least this original Japanese version beats the awful, bastardized TIDAL WAVE. ** - *Jeff Goodhart*

SWORDS OF THE SPACE ARK-

A movie edited together from episodes of the MESSAGE FROM SPACE TV show (Toei, 1978). Just as action packed as you'd expect from a 1970s J.A.C. production. There are a few genuinely surprising plot twists. At least the equal of the movie, and possibly better! Dir. Minoru Yamada, Starring Hiroyuki Sanada *** - *Christopher Elam*

TERROR BENEATH THE SEA-

Involving horror/sci-fi movie from Toei, 1966. Yet another group of mad scientists want to create a race of zombie-like gill men. It's up to that dynamic duo of Sonny Chiba and Peggy Luo to save the day. But oh, what a surprise the screenwriter has in store for them! Dir. Hajime Sato, Starring: Shunichi Chiba, Peggy Neal, Andrew Hughes, Eric Nielsen. *** 1/2 - *Christopher Elam*

TERROR OF MECHAGODZILLA-

Depending on how good a print you see, this movie will either be about the triumph of the greatest human emotion...love, or a confusing mass of non-sequiturs that will leave you shaking your

head. Right. This is a monster movie. Aliens revive Mechagodzilla with the help of an evil scientist by restoring his beloved daughter to life with a mechanical heart. This gives her control over Mechagodzilla and Titanosaurus. Godzilla as usual gets his butt beat around for most of the movie until, with the help of the daughter who is still human, sends them packing. The

when some guy finally turns into a gorilla (thanks to a potion or chemical he drinks) and goes on a weak little rampage where he tosses chairs at police and kidnaps some sexy girl who performs in clubs or circuses. These final moments are amusing for their similarities to GORILLA AT LARGE (1954), though the guy's makeup transformation looks more like something out of an old film about Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde or The Werewolf. 1/2 - *Damon Foster*

TETSUO THE IRON MAN (1988)-

Of course you're sick of it now, but years from now this nasty low-budget art film will be regarded as a classic. *Only by deaf, blind, homosexual morons. -DF!* The story? A battle royale between the forces of meat and metal. The black & white, psycho sexual, industrial wasteland here is nothing new (just say ERASERHEAD), but the hyperactive fusion of monster movies and anime overkill push the material into strange new grounds. A shocking debut from Shinya Tsukamoto, and a genuine genre accomplishment **** - *Patrick Macias*

TIDAL WAVE (aka NIPPON CHINBOTSU, which means

"Submersion of Japan", "Japan Sinks", etc.) My general distaste for disaster flicks explains why I wasn't particularly entertained by this 1974 Toho melodrama. Despite Teruyoshi Nakano's great SPFX, Masaru Sato's score and starring roles by Tetsuro Tanba and Hiroshi Fujioka (called "John" Fujioka in the English version's credits, which is stupid, there's already a completely different actor called that), this is a badly dubbed, badly written & badly



plots of the 1970s Godzilla movies are not very good, and the only time you can say anything good about the cast is when they do not have any children in them. Great Godzilla fights only count for so much. *** - *John Auken*

TETSU NO TSUME ("Claws of Iron")-

An early B&W, disappointing flick (Daiel, 1951) which starts off as an ultra tedious, slow-paced drama until the final 20 minutes

AKIRA IFUKUBE

Born & raised in Sapporo, a multi-ethnic community in Japan, with Ainu, Russians, and of course, Japanese. So as a child, he got exposure to all sorts of different music: traditional music of the Ainu, the Russians, the Japanese, and was also like totally into European classical. Though he originally studied in a university to be a forest serviceman, his interest in forestry didn't keep him from toying around in music. He became a self-taught musician, and through the urging of a friend of his who was a music composer, Ifukube composed a song called "Japanese Rhapsody" in 1929. It became a hit all over the world (if you

have the time to look into some classical reference books in your local library, you just might find Ifukube's name in the same pages which have Beethoven, Mozart, Sid Vicious, etc.). He became a famous classical composer, many musicians all over the world have re-orchestrated his music. Akira's tunes were, at one time or another, wellknown all over Europe (places like Russia, Italy, etc.), though he's still relatively unknown in the self-centered U.S.A. (but then, most things are). He's also a music professor & teacher, and many of his under-studies were people like Sei Ikino (SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN), Kan Wakabayashi (son of composer of GORATH), and

even Richiro Minabe (GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER, MEGALON, LAKE OF DRACULA, etc.)! Speaking of movie soundtracks: Fumio Hayasaka (composer for many Akira Kurosawa flicks) suggested Ifukube too should score films, which he didn't want to do at first. But Fumio Hayasaka died at an early age of tuberculosis (in 1954) after composing SEVEN SAMURAI. So Akira Ifukube stepped in Hayasaka's shoes, his first film being director Senkichi Taniguchi's (SAGA OF THE VAGABONDS & GAMBLING SAMURAI) TO THE END OF THE SILVER MOUNTAIN, and it was Toshiro Mifune's first movie too. At first Ifukube & Taniguchi didn't get along (creative differences as to



acted stinker. If the Japanese footage wasn't dull enough, Roger Corman's New World Pictures and/or Max E. Youngsien Enterprises added American footage of Lorne Greene as a U.S. ambassador, and it's painfully obvious his scenes will only be seen in the American version, and that he never was on the same set (or even the same continent) as the Japanese characters. The script deals with Japan sinking, and the chaos that ensues: Earthquakes, explosions, mudslides, tidal waves, etc. The first scientist to predict this havoc is Dr. Tadokoro (Keiju Kobayashi), and Hiroshi Fujikura plays a submarine pilot searching for his girlfriend Reiko (Ayumi Ishida), allowing for sappy romance. Great miniatures in an otherwise snore-filled flick 1/2 -*Damon Foster*

TIME OF THE APES (1974) This is a bad, stupid movie. But it's a kinda' fun, bad, stupid movie. Well, almost. A few people accidentally get trapped in suspended animation and awaken sometime in the future to find the world dominated by militant apes. Nowhere near as good as **PLANET OF THE APES**, but at least it isn't boring. **1/2 -*Jeff Goodhart*

TOMEI NINGEN "Invisible Avenger" was the tentative English title of this 1954 Toho

film, had it ever gotten dubbed, which it didn't. Not available for review, but the script would appear to be about a heroic invisible man who rescues damsels in distress, against mobsters or whatever, in this B&W film. Dir. Moritoshi Oda. -*DF*

TOMEI NINGEN ARAWARU ("Transparent Man Appears") Though I give credit to this B&W oldie (Daiet, 1949) for being Japan's first genuine sci-fi movie, and suggest it for completist fans (only), it's otherwise a narcotic bore. The typical "invisible man" FX are effective, but are blatantly imitative of Universal's **INVISIBLE MAN** (1933), **THE INVISIBLE MAN RETURNS** (1939), and **THE INVISIBLE MAN'S REVENGE** (1944). However, if somebody were to have translated this 1949 drama into English, it just might prove to be somewhat interesting. The script has something to do with a scientist who gets kidnapped by jewel thieves who use his "invisibility potion" for their own nefarious deeds. 1/2 -*Damon Foster*

TOMEI NINGEN TO HAE OTOKO ("Transparent Man and the Fly Man") Daiet's 1957 sequel is pretty dull and pointless if you're not Japanese. It's a slow-paced, B&W drama about some invisible guy who helps police to locate a psychotic "fly-man", literally a man who shrinks down to the size of a fly, and can even fly like one, making that same buzzing sound, but with no wings! But the drug which reduces him is addictive and drives him insane, and when he's at normal size, he enjoys stabbing people, including voluptuous, beautiful ladies at some nightclub. Though it's talky and virtually unwatchable at times, there are a few decent FX, like an excellent miniature of an exploding building. Otherwise, it's pretty much just a crime drama and/or mystery; definitely sleep-bait. * -*Damon Foster*



SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN An old, early (completed in 1960, though I would have guessed it was much older), crude B&W Toho drama inspired by Daiet's Tomei Ningen flicks, but to American audiences, this talker more closely resembles **THE H-MAN** and **DAGORA** **THE SPACE MONSTER**, as it too concentrates on police detectives investigating crimes caused by mysterious phenomena. Boring at times but on the whole it's interesting, as Akihiko Hirata pursues an ex-WWII soldier who uses a teleportation device (you think Gene Roddenberry used this flick as the basis for **STAR TREK's** Transporter?) to sneak past security and kill old acquaintances who wronged him 14 years prior. The emphasis is more on mystery & suspense than special effects, but I kinda' liked it. **1/2 -*Damon Foster*



UCHU G-MEN An early TV series literally meaning "Space G-Men", which

now the picture's score should be), but that never stopped Ifukube from scoring more films. His only Akira Kurosawa flick was **THE QUIET DUEL**, from the late 1940s. After scoring a number of films for different studios, he was chosen to supply the tunes for **GODZILLA**, **KING OF THE MONSTERS**, and the rest is historical history. Heli, he's pr obably about 75 today and is currently scoring **GODZILLA VS. DESTROYA!** Recently Masaru Sato (**THE H-MAN**, **GODZILLA VS. COSMIC MONSTER**) conducted an arrangement of Ifukube's music, av ailable on C.D.

MASARU SATO

After Fumio Hayasaka died, Akira Kurosawa chose Sato as his next movie music-maker. He used Sato almost exclusively, and Sato has scored a great wealth of movies above & beyond sci-fi movies (which only account for a handful of the films he's actually scored). His tunes are in countless films, including **YOJIMBO**, **SANJURO**, **GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER**, **H-MAN**, **HALF HUMAN**, **GODZILLA VS. THE SEA MONSTER**, and **GODZILLA VS. THE COSMIC MONSTER**.

SHUNSUKE KIKUCHI

Probably the best action-music composer, one of his first movie scores was in **THE 8TH ENEMY**, but is better known as a superhero musician from the 1970s, doing many songs for both live action and animated programs. His music can be heard in all the Kamen Rider programs of the 1970s, three of the Gamera movies, **BODYSNATCHER** from **HELL**, **GENOCIDE**, **TERROR BENEATH THE SEA**, **JUMBORG ACE**, **BAROM 1**, **HENSHIN NINJA ARASHI**, **IRON KING**, **DIAMOND EYE**, **DENJUN ZABOGA**, **TIGER 7**, and **KYODINE**, to name a few. Needless to say, he was (possibly still is?) a prolific musician, much in demand.

KANJI YAGI

The brother of Masao Yagi (a free lance Art Director who worked with Toho on GODZILLA before joining Daisel to work on Gamera films), Kanji Yagi stayed with Toho, unlike his brother. Kanji Yagi was a special effects technician who was involved in the Godzilla series up until DESTROY ALL MONSTERS, and was also pictured in the group portraits (photos of cast & crew) for RETURN OF ULTRAMAN. So he obviously stayed with Toho then made the inevitable cross-over to Tsuburaya by the early 1970s before his death shortly thereafter.

MASAO YAGI

Born: 1926, Aichi-ken

Masao was the brother of Kanji Yagi (another FX maker). Masao's earliest credit was as an art dir. & prop maker for GODZILLA KING OF THE MONSTERS, before quitting Toho and joining Daisel. He was a freelancer, who basically joined & quit Daisel off & on, enough to help work on a number of Gamera films, where he helped construct the Baragon, Gyaos & Viras costumes. In the late 1960s, he formed a company with his son Isao Yagi, called Eklis Productions (though in the late 1970s, they may have changed the name to Cosmo Productions; I'm not sure). They're the people who went on to make all the Kamen Rider costumes for Toei, as well as many of the monsters & other superheroes of Toei's other 1970s TV programs. Becoming experts at creating costumes of superheroes & monsters, it was no major surprise when the Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong movie moguls) enlisted the help of the Yagis when it came time to create the monsters & Inframan costume for INFRAMAN (Shaw Bros.; 1975)! So Eklis Productions actually created the supposedly Chinese creatures which ripped off their own productions (i.e. most specifically, Toei's INAZUMANI). Eklis Productions were hired by Run Run Shaw & Run Me Shaw to create the costumes, but they paid them only a fraction of the budget that Toei had given them for the Kamen Rider monsters. But despite the budgetary limitations, the Japanese costumes in INFRAMAN are pretty damn nifty.

may have been an inspiration for CAPTAIN ULTRA. Unfortunately, UCHU G-MEN wasn't available for review. -DP

ULTRA Q: THE MOVIE Full color, 1990 remake of the original series, but being feature length, is stretched & padded out; it's talky, confusing, slow-paced and worst of all, unwatchably dull! This god-awful talker is absolutely worthless if you're not fluent in Japanese and have a lot of time on your hands. There are a couple nice FX (and decent cameos & supporting roles by Jyoti Kobayashi, Mitao Dokumimashi & Hiroshi Tsuburaya) scenes though. In one scene, some sort of silver ghost (resembling a female superhero) called "Mirror-Metal" chases people through a forest, for whatever reason. There's also a marauding reptile called Nagira who destroys buildings, and although these scenes are a more up-to-date, perfected version of the old monster-on-the-loose-in-Tokyo theme, such scenes are dwarfed by endless dialogue that's so staggeringly boring and unpleasant that I would rather watch Margaret Thatcher do a striptease. 1/2 -Damon Foster

VAMPIRE An old B&W show from Fuji TV (26 episodes; 1969), and although it's actually much more of a horror/suspense/fantasy than sci-fi, it's unique FX (combining live action and animation) should amuse horror & sci-fi fans alike. Regrettably, I've only seen photos and film clips from this unique Osamu Tezuka series. Despite the title, the story seems to have much more to do with werewolves. -DF

VARAN THE UNBELIEVABLE (Toho; 1958)



Not as bad as advertised, but pretty darn close. This monster movie has virtually

nothing to do with the Toho film on which it is ostensibly based. Has anyone else noticed the facial and vocal resemblance between Myron Healey and former SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE player Phil Hartman? Dir. Ishiro Honda & Jerry A. Beerwitz, Starring: Myron Healey, Tsuruko Kobayashi, Clifford Kawada. **1/2 -Christopher Elam

WARNING FROM SPACE (UCHUJIN TO KYO NI ARAWARU, which means "Space-men Appear in Tokyo") The first time I tried sitting through this slow-paced fiasco



(Daisel, 1956). I was a twerp, and it was on at 3:00 a.m., so naturally I dozed off. But I thought viewing it today on tape, as an adult (at least, physically), at my own leisure, would be a different story. But guess what, even if it is Japan's first color sci-fi drama, this tedious movie is staggeringly boring, with no action, and only a few decent FX (mainly just brief destruction scenes). The alien spaceship looks like it's made of kazooes and party horns, but the star-shaped aliens themselves (who come to earth to warn us about dangerous explosives and a planet on a collision course with Earth) look okay. The only interesting effect is when one of them transforms to impersonate some club singer. -Damon Foster

WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS Giant hairy humanoids are on the loose in this sequel (sort of) to FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD. One is brown and nice, while the other is green and mean.

Kumi Mizuno plays almost the exact part and Russ Tamblyn & Kenji Sahara replace Nick Adams & Tadao Takashima. One of the best. **** -Christopher Elam

WAR OF THE MONSTERS-See **GAMERA VS. BARUGON**.

WATER CYBORG-See **TERROR BENEATH THE SEA**.

X-BOMBER (Jin Pro, 1980)-The longtime popularity of Gerry Anderson's "supermarionation" programs like **SUPERCAR** and **THUNDERBIRDS** resulted in this unusual item-a Japanese marionette TV series created by comic

clever and imaginative film, so it's too bad that Shochiku didn't make any other monster movies. **** -Christopher Elam

YOG, MONSTER FROM SPACE-I dare the film makers to prove they used a script to make this one. Aliens come to Earth and start creating monsters. Japan responds by trying to financially exploit them, proving their disrespect for imports. The best line is "The End" because this crappy movie almost makes **GODZILLA'S REVENGE** watchable. almost. * John Ingram /DFberg for the record, I think this enjoyable movie of native islanders & reporters pitted against a giant squid, turtle & crab is excellent fun, worthy of the four stars I gave it back in 1990's *OC'71* -Bd/

ZERAM (1991)-After having that crappy American Power Rangers film shoved in my face to the point of puking, it is a joy to see that there are some really good Japanese live action films available on video. Zeram is a renegade alien nightmare impervious to all weapons. But that doesn't stop galactic bounty hunter Iiya (Yuko Moriyama) from throwing everything but the kitchen sink at him! Enjoyable even in dubbed form. Dir: Keita Amemiya, Prod: Yoshinori Chiba & Kouichi Sugisawa, Starring: Yuko Moriyama, Kunihiko Ida, & Yukihiro Hotaru. ***1/2 -Patricia Gonzales

WAR OF THE GIANTS



book artist Go Nagai (of **MAZINGER** fame). It concerns heroic space pilot Shiro's quest for a powerful space-godess and his battles with an evil alien empire & their floating fortress. Shiro & his companions fight the bad guys with a giant robot called **X-Bomber**. All in all, just another **SPACE CRUISER YAMATO** ripoff, with a few nice Nagai-style touches- the most overt being a villainess named Bloody Mary, who sports a metal eyepatch covering a grotesque demon face where her eye should be. The whole series was compiled into two English language feature films under the title **STARFLEETS**. 1/2 -Frank Strom

X FROM OUTER SPACE-A group of astronauts is enroute to Mars when a UFO leaves spores on their spaceship. One of those spores hatches into the monster **Guila**, which is usually described as a giant chicken. It's not a chicken, but it is one weird-looking critter. This is one



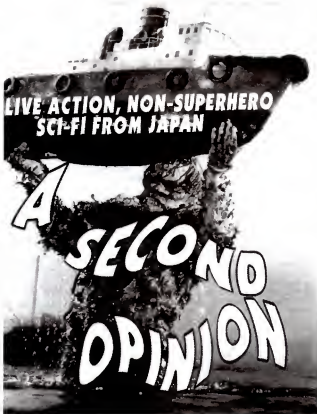
FUMIO OHASHI

A little known dude from the Kaiju Elga, his debut was actually in a Japanese Tarzan-ish flick not unlike Dale's **BURUSA**, called **NHON NO TAZAN** ("Tarzan of Japan"). But Fumio Ohashi was an important guy in the sci-fi scene; after the Japanese Tarzan (he was a big guy who played the title role) flick, he joined Toho. He became a monster suit actor, and was in **HALF HUMAN**. He also worked behind the scenes to help perfect the making of monster costumes. He eventually left Toho in the 1960s, and went on to make the **BAW** TV series **KAIJU AGON**, produced by the company **Nihon Denpa Elga** (meaning "Japan Radio Pictures", obviously inspired by our own **RKO**). When the advertising came out for the **AGON** series, Toho tried to sue (they were doing it even back then!) them because they felt **AGON** looked too much like **Godzilla**. But when Toho found out it was their old friend Fumio Ohashi (one of many who worked on **GODZILLA** himself), they said basically, "Oh, it's you? Well, it's ok ay then."



NOBUO YAJIMA

One of the first things this Toei FX dude worked on was 1967's **CAPTAIN ULTRA**, and later entrees include **JOHNNY SOKKO & HIS FLYING ROBOT**, **MESSAGE FROM SPACE**, and worked under Toho's Akira Watanabe in **GREEN SLIME**. He became the main FX director for Toei TV some time in the mid-1970s. Though he's most commonly associated with his famous work for Toei, his non-Toei projects include: **ULTRAMAN ACE**, **MIRORMAN**, **JUMBORG ACE**. But still, he's basically a Toei guy, and listing all his Toei credits would take more time than I have; In fact, it would be easier to list the Toei sci-fi flicks & shows he didn't work on! However, he recently handed the torch to Hiroshi Butsuda in the early 1990s, who now directs FX for later programs: **ZYU RANGER**, **DAI RANGER**, this 'n the t **RANGER**, etc. But Yajima still gets credit for doing Toei's current non-Sentai programs, often called the "Mei Tai Hero" (though I tried labling them "Robo Heroes" several few issues ago) genre, i.e. **B-FIGHTER**.



I hate to leave anybody out (even Kevin Loneragan and Jeff Goodhart, who, though his last name indicates he's got a good heart, sent his reviews so late they almost missed my deadline), especially after I begged these guys to contribute reviews to OC. Besides, alternate views of a film never hurt, even though everybody in the world would be a hell of a lot better off if you all agreed with me 100%. Oh well, I forgive you.

ATRAGON: Considered a classic by some Toho sci-fi buffs. I never thought it was that good, but it's entertaining with a great music score and fun FX. The Atragon ship looks terrific and the Manda prop is better than the one in DESTROY ALL MONSTERS. *** *Jeff Goodhart*

BATTLE IN OUTERSPACE: A neat com-

panion piece to THE MYSTERIANS with more great FX and crazy music (part of which is cut in the American print). *** *Jeff Goodhart*

DAIGORO TAI GORIAS ("Daigoro vs Goliath"): Fans of Toho's giant reptiles should get a kick out of this disjointed, uneven, confusing, nonsensical comedy (from Tsuburaya) about Daigoro, a giant monster who looks like a hippo and acts like Minya. If viewed only for its giant monsters and miniatures, this stupid kiddie film succeeds. But the infantile, annoying human characters ramble on endlessly in a series of slapstick skits meant to be funny. This early 1970s farce bears an unfortunate resemblance to the Korean movies of Shim Hyung Rei, you think maybe Shim considers DAIGORO TAI GOLIATH a training film? The lame yet

amusing film falls somewhere inbetween GODZILLA'S REVENGE and CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG. Scriptwise, it seems to be about scientists (and twerps) who raise friendly monster Daigoro on some island, who eventually fights off some blue, horned dinosaur from space. *1/2-D *DF*

DESTROY ALL MONSTERS: This is the one. The greatest Japanese monster bash of all time and one of the two or three best oriental films ever. And if you disagree with this statement, go fuck yourself! **** *Jeff Goodhart*

FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD: A super terrific piece of braindead fun. The heart of Frankenstein monster is transported from Germany to Japan during WWII and is caught in the Hiroshima A-Bomb blast. Now, whether the heart grew a new body or was eaten by a Japanese kid I just don't know. But the boy-monster grows gigantic and defeats the horned dinosaur before being conveniently dragged underwater by a giant octopus (in the rare Japanese video version I prefer, anyway). They just don't make 'em like this anymore. Damn! ****1/2 *Jeff Goodhart*

GORATH: The epic borefest (Toho, 1962) from Inoshuro Honda. I've recently seen the missing giant walrus segment and am sorry to say that I wasn't missing much. * *Jeff Goodhart*

GREEN SLIME (Toei, 1968): Looking back, was this movie really as bad as they say it was? Sure, the miniatures were fake-looking, and occasionally you'll see a string of two! But was this really such a messed-up movie? I've liked it since I was a single-digit IQ kid, and still find it fun & enjoyable, even as a two-digit IQ adult! The plot, which is simple in its simplicity, concerns how some clumsy, sloppy boob got some glob on his suit just before he blows up an asteroid heading for Earth. Well, that little gloopy snort grows like a pimple on my bum and causes a lot of chaos, shooting, palping, screaming, bed-wetting, and a whole lot of fun, before the final shoot-out between the Green Slimes and the humans! The humans win 30-15, and as a reward, some guy sings about The Green Slime, as the credit roles on in the end! Now, where did my green Jell-O go to? *** *Kevin Loneragan*

HALF HUMAN: If you whined about AMERICAN releases of GODZILLA, GAMERA and VARAN, wait 'til you see this terrible injustice! All the Japanese footage is presented in condensed form,

via fades & flashbacks, with John Carradine narrating the whole damn thing (we never really hear the Japanese characters speak). The American inserts of Carradine are set in some office or lab, as he recounts [for a couple reporters or anthropologists] how an ape-guy was discovered by skiers in the Japanese mountains. It's interesting that Carradine compares this missing link's being related to The Peking Man (China's Big Foot), since the ape in the Hong Kongese flick GOLIATHON (Chinese title: MIGHTY Y PEKING MAN) from Shaw Brothers definitely resembles the murderous monkey in HALF HUMAN! Coincidence? The gorilla costumes in HALF HUMAN are better than average for a Japanese film (which isn't saying much), and despite the American re-edits, it's still an enjoyable, intriguing B&W monster movie about the hunt for a couple vicious abominable snowmen. Interesting to note that the original Japanese print is not available on video because of protests: a tribe of Ainu (Japan's original, indigenous race) are treated like superstitious freaks (except for a strong-willed heroine who sacrifices herself), a couple of which look like mutants. **1/2 - *Damon Foster*

H-MAN, THE Never cared for this film (Toho, 1957) very much. Like the idea though. A radio-active version of THE BLOB. Funny how I remembered the FX being slimmer and scarier as a kid. They look pretty ordinary now. ** - *Jeff Goodbartz*

HUMAN VAPOR, THE An interesting variation of THE INVISIBLE MAN. Solid acting and cool FX make it worthwhile. A pretty impressive, neo-giant monster entry (Toho, 1959) from Inoshiro Honda. *** - *Jeff Goodbartz*

LAST WAR Tried watching this incredible bore (Toho, 1962) twice. I fell asleep both times. No stars. - *Jeff Goodbartz*

LATITUDE ZERO A strange one (Toho, 1969) from Inoshiro Honda, shot in English, no less. Fvll professor Malec (Garcia Romero) is hasseling the Japanese citizens with goofy-looking monsters. So it's Akira Takarada (broken English and all) as an American buddies to the rescue. *** - *Jeff Goodbartz*

MYSTERIANS (1957) - It's an all-out war with arrogant alien invaders and Japan is up to the challenge! The dialogue scenes drag a bit, but the light show put on by the "Markkille vs. Alien Dome" sequences more than make up for it. Plus it features the loudest, most maniacal musical music score I've ever heard in a Toho film. ***1/2 - *Jeff Goodbartz*

SECRET OF THE TELEGIAN An interesting idea that falls way, way short of its potential. About a killer who can matter-transport himself (or something like that). Toho, 1960. * - *Jeff Goodbartz*

TERROR BENEATH THE SEA (Toei, 1966) Here's a fun little thriller from Hajime Sato. Reporter Sonny Chiba battles sinister forces in an underwater fortress. The "water cyborgs" are just too cool. ***1/2 - *Jeff Goodbartz*

WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS (1966; Toho) - In this follow-up to FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD, two giant caveman-like gargantuas terrorize Tokyo, fight each other, fall in love with Kumi Mizuno, and get killed in a volcano eruption. Fairly standard early to mid-'60s Toho fare. It's fun, though, with great sets & FX. WAR isn't the most high profile Toho epic, but I think it sums up what the genre was all about at that period. All the style, look, excitement, humor and clichés - and as such makes for good entertainment, humor and clichés. As such, it makes for good entertainment. Co-star Russ Tamblyn puts in a good showing here, but I miss Nick Adams. *** - *Frank Strom*

A THIRD OPINION:

WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS - Frightening images, three-dimensional characters (including the gargantuas, excluding Russ Tamblyn) and suspenseful battles make this one of the best monster movies ever made. This film's first half is an intense hunt for Green Gargantua, but all hell breaks loose when GG's big brown brother (right on!) jumps in for the second half. The worst song ever put onto film is this movie's "The words Get Stuck in my Throat", followed closely by the songs George Harrison did for Madonna's "Shanghai Surprise". Best line: "Whenever there's a strong evil force around, youth suddenly starts to blossom." - Russ Tamblyn, probably wondering if Green Gargantua is made out of marijuana. *** - *John Ingram*

CAN YOU BELIEVE IT? A 4TH OPINION:

WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS (1966) - This sequel to FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD is one of my all-time favorites. I was 7 or 8 when I first saw it and it left a huge impression on me. Two cousins of the Frankenstein monster (one good, one evil, both incredibly life-like) have a little squabble over how to deal with mankind. On a special note, this is

the only none Godzilla flick to briefly use the Godzilla/Rodan theme from Akira Ifukube. Most of you won't give a shit, but it's a big deal to me! **** - *Jeff Goodbartz*

X-BOMBER - A marionette show, sort of Japan's answer to THUNDERBIRDS, but with that staple of Japanese sci-fi TV, a giant robot. All the spaceships, miniatures, pyrotechnics & other miniatures are splendid, but the highlight is a slick rockin' theme song. Our heroic space pilot Shiro, along with General Kurada & others is fending off an attack by Bloody Mary, a female invader who dresses like one of MESSAGE FROM SPACE's Gavanas. Otherwise, this slow-paced show is pretty dull, even in its inferior English dub, STARFLEET. *1/2 - *DF*

X FROM OUTERSPACE, THE - Gailula, a great space monster, takes a backseat to a well-scripted view of future space travel. An ill-fated trip to Mars brings spores to Earth, unleashing Gailula. Quicker pacing and more money to help this film's good concepts would have helped. Best scene: Two hot chicks get bitchy as they shower together on the moon. *** - *John Ingram*

YOG, MONSTER FROM SPACE - An alien amoeba takes over various giant animals on a tropical island with the eventual intention of conquering the world. It doesn't make sense, but it's still a personal favorite of mine. It moves at a great pace and the characters are all entertaining. Sure, the "octopus" is rubbery, and the turtle is more cute than menacing, but so what? *** - *Jeff Goodbartz*

A 3RD OPINION:

YOG, MONSTER FROM SPACE - This odd film, about giant seafood platters on a rampage, was directed by none other than the late great Inoshiro Honda, so you know it's going to be a blast, and not just because I farted a minute ago. As always, the monster suits are superb, and the miniatures are nifty. The plot concerns some alien, who like any good alien, wants to conquer the Earth and sets up shop at a little Japanese island, cranking out mutant giant crabs, squids & turtles (oh, my!) The islanders (on the island) are bothered a bit by the crab, squid & Gamera's cousin until they turn the table on "yog" itself! The result, the bad monsters go bye bye! Toho, 1971. Produced by Tomoyuki Tanaka, Music: Akira Ifukube, Special Effects by Sadamasa Arikawa & Yoschi Manoda. ***1/2 - *Kevin Loneragan*

HONG KONG HEROES



For this here edition of "HK HEROES" I'll start out with that most rarest of things in OC, a book review! Hell, I haven't done a book review since the Monkey King issue from the mid-1980s, when I reviewed Wu Cheng En's *Journey to the West* (sometimes I think my review is as ancient as the novel itself). In this case, I'm recommending Peter Huston's *Tongs, Gangs and Triads* (Paladin Press, 1995), all about Chinese crime groups in North America. This informative book is an absolute must for anyone confused by OCS "HK Gangster" edition, from a few issues ago. Damn, I wish I had Mr. Huston's thorough book as research material back then! It leaves no questions unanswered, and even talks about Chinese culture & history, which sometimes, is more fascinating than the actual triad info. So if you're interested in the facts on Chinese gangs, order the book from Paladin Press, P.O. Box 1607, Boulder, Colorado, 80506. Their price is \$30.00 per book, though you may wish to write to them first, to see what they charge for postage.

1960s

邊城三俠 THE MAGNIFICENT TRIO

A Shaw Brothers Film, 1966, Dir. Chang Cheh (aka Chin Chien & Chang Cheh), Screenplay: Chang Cheh, Producer: Runme Shaw, Asst. Dir.: Hsiung Ta, Film Ed.: Chung Hsin, Photography: Wang Yung Loon, Sound Rec.: Wang Ying Hua, Music: Wang Foa, Art Dir.: Chan Cbi, Makeup: Wu Chi, Starring: Jimmy Wang Yu, Lo Lieh, Cheng Lei, Chin Ping, Margaret Tu Chuan, Fanny Fan, Tien Feng, Ku Feng, Wu Ma, Hao Li. Reviewed by Damon Foster

Ah yes, the pre-chop sockey years, the 1960s! I'll take an enjoyable costume drama like this one over any of its mu-

tant descendants (flicks full of gaudy wire effects and endless rivalries from various sects of gravity-defying forest dwellers) of the 1990s! Though there are a few outrageous leaps in *THE MAGNIFICENT TRIO*, they're used sparingly, so that this 1960s fantasy can maintain a remote sign of realism & coherency. It's actually pretty typical of other old Shaw sword-flicks; same production values (i.e. nice interior sets of forests, etc.), same stock music (this time I could have sworn I heard a piece from Masaru Sato's *H-MAN* music), same familiar actors of that decade, and last and certainly not least— the same style of 1960s swordplay seen in *ONE ARMED SWORDS-MAN*, *THE TWIN SWORDS*, *THE ASSASSIN*, and other Wang Yu oldies. It's that basic, innocent swordplay which may not look as technically polished & accurate as that in the 1970s successors, but its crudeness

is forgivable because the sword-fights are enjoyable regardless.

The usual colorful costumes punctu-



Scenes from
FUN AND
FURY



ate this story of swordfighting do-gooder Lu, played by Wang Yu of course. He, like Lo Lieh's character (called Penny-oops! I mean, he's called Y'en), and the ever prominent Cheng Lei (he's been in more 1960s costume dramas than there are Mark Fuhrman fan clubs in the South), were all originally working for corrupt tyrant Wei Huan Yuan at one point. But during the course of this movie, each eventually realizes that their leader is a greedy, doublecrossing villain, and eventually aid righteous renegades who have kidnapped the bad guy's daughter (though she is innocent of such crimes, and even helps the rebels by delivering a much sought after petition against her nasty dad, to the emperor). Expect several swordfights, but plenty of slowpaced drama & romance too. Thankfully, there are no ballads this time. While the climactic swordfight is excellent, the actual team up between our three magnificent heroes is brief, since it's not long before Cheng Lei receives a fatal arrow or two. Fortunately, Wang Yu & Lo Lieh more than suffice as they battle hordes of soldiers side by side, until finally they win their battle and all the buddies are more dead than a mosh pit at a Donnie & Marie reunion concert. *** -Damon Foster

POISON ROSE
毒玫瑰
Producer: Runme Shaw, Screenplay: Pan Lei, Dir. Pan Lei, Editing: Chang Hsing Loong, Photo: Hung Chung Yin, Sound Rec: Wang Yun Hua, Asst. Dir: Chang Fan Hsia & Wei Wing Ao, Art Dir: Tsou Chib Liang, Makeup: Chang Feng, Music: Wang Chu Jen, Composer: Chow Lan Ping, Lyrics: Pan Lei, Starring: Julie Yeh, Feng Wang Hsia, Wen Jing, Tsung Hsi, Wei Ping Ao, Reviewed by DF

I was expecting another modern 1960s spy actioner along the lines of JAMES BOND CHINESE STYLE, SUMMONS TO DEATH or OPERATION MACAO, but what I got was a talky, confusing private eye mystery and plenty of sleep. The flavorful music is okay, but that's about all I liked. Though it starts off promising, with the potential for the same type of HK spy stuff as the far superior SUMMONS TO DEATH (***; see my review in OC'83) quickly degenerates and rambles on to be just another stupid love story. Its few action scenes (I counted two shootouts & three fist fights—all of which were fairly weak) failed to deliver the goods, especially since a complex, forever rambling, meandering plot surrounds them.

I never considered Wang Hsia (SUMMONS TO DEATH, INFRAMAN) to be the

charismatic hero type, and this disappointing farce shows why. Also on hand is '60s starlet Julie Yeh (Feng, and I'm proud that for once in my life, I'm spelling her name correctly! In OC'83, I accidentally renamed her 'Joong Yeh Feih'), and 'Chin Han', of all things! I've only seen her in one other film, THE WARLORD AND THE ACTRESS, which was at least more coherently written than this one.

Wang Hsia plays a detective called Kang Hua, who talks his way through a series of investigations at some nightclub called the Black Widow, because the cops suspect the place is smuggling drugs. So far, so good, but it's not long before he starts romancing the club's singer (Yeh Feng, she sings three ballads which put my Sean Burton to excessive use), and it's not until the middle of the flick that we discover she and the other thugs at the club are hiding drugs in bowling balls. Meanwhile, there's some pointless subplot about Kang Hua's ex-girlfriend trying to locate him using some Private Investigator with funny teeth. Eventually, assuming we're still some what conscious, we get the idea that the main villain is that guy who poisoned Bruce Lee's teacher in FIST OF FURY, and the restaurant owner in RETURN OF THE DRAGON who stabs Tony Liu & Unicorn Chan in the back. Whoever this actor is, he gets defeated by Wang Hsia after a lame fight where he falls to his death onto some jagged rocks at the beach & tide pools. * -Damon Foster



GRAND MASTER OF SHAOLIN KUNG FU

Presented by IFD Films & Arts Limited, A Joseph Lai Release, Dir: Godfrey Lau, Exec. Prod. George Lai, Editor: Leung Wing Chi, Screenplay: Andy Man, Titles: Chung Chi, Starring: Philip Chung King Kon, Gordon Lee, Pearl Lin, Toshiro Kurosagi, John La, Bruce Ng, David Chan, Ming Tung, Richard Kam, Raymond Pao, Claus Wong, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Another typical period fantasy, but this one is unique to me in that it's the first Chinese film I ever saw dubbed in Spanish (it aired on Channel 14, a local Mexican station), so I taped it for the sheer novelty of it. I had already gotten the English version off another channel about a month before! Though both versions consist entirely of recognizable stock music, they both have different selections. As I recall, the Spanish print is mostly lifted from STAR WARS, while the equally cheap English soundtrack (with only one "but still") has a more diverse selection

of stolen songs. It was interesting to watch both versions, side-by-side, playing on two VCRs, connected to two TVs. It's a great way to learn Spanish. Here's some of what I picked up.... We say "teacher", they say "maestro", we say "bastard", they say "bastardo", possibly even when we laugh, they say "el laugh-o".

Anything from Chinese schlock makers Joseph Lau and Godfrey Ho has got to be an unintentional comedy as this cheap ripoff of the Shaw Brothers epics demonstrates beautifully. In one scene, our hero (easily 28 years old, at least) finally loses his virginity and therefore can't be taught a special type of kung fu which requires full strength! His girlfriend Ah Min (Pearl Lin) isn't a bad looker, so I think he made the right choice. But if you think sex is an unusual weapon, wait until you see the mechanical bird! Some villain unleashes a toy (wind up) bird which flies around and fires some sort of blinding eggs which injure one of the many cocky martial artists, so the toy birds or wiper puts it to his opponent bluntly: "No wu you've got egg on your face". Who comes up with this stuff? I guess this film's writer must be a real druggie, and to this day, I bet he's having [sulfuric] acid flashbacks.

But silliness aside, GRAND MASTER OF SHAOLIN KUNG FU is no worse than average for 1970s poyntail chop sockey. Sure, its acting, editing, photography, & cinematography for the most part stunk, but in one way or another, it's consistently entertaining. It's action packed, consisting mainly of one challenge after another, characters are quickly introduced sometimes just to get into fights and get killed off. There are duels a plenty: fists, kicks, swords, a gourd which fires needles, acrobatic leaps, etc. The martial arts vary in quality, and Pearl Lin seems to be one of the more skillful of the cast.

It's story time. Something to do with the quest for a gem that every kung fu master in old China wants to get his greedy tiger paws on. After many a battle, heroic Chun (Philip Chung) gets the gem, and it leads him to some golden Buddha statue which can fire a cheap laser looking something like what you would see in SPECTREM. Anyway, some old monk [at the Golden Buddha] begins teaching our hero more kung fu so he can defeat the villains who killed his parents when he was a kid. Throw in the inevitable woman dressed as a man, impossibly precise plate throwing in a restaurant, some magic powers (but suspension wires are kept to a minimum—thank Damon! Er, that is, I mean, thank God!), and of course, a battle with 19 bronze men (gone bad, bribed I assume. But how do you pay a bronze man? Certainly not in bronze) using a snake technique until

their evil commander dismisses them as a bunch of "idiots" and the y leave. From then on, heroic Chun and his heroic girlfriend beat up the not-so-heroic villain, on a beach. Again." - *Damon Foster*

GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Starring Han Ying-chieh, Sombat Asternee, Tian Feng & Lo Lieh, Released to the U.S. in 1985 by Ocean Shores Video, 90 min, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Stear clear of this fiasco, it's talky and unfollowable even in this badly dubbed English adaptation. It's another story of opium smugglers in that area of Southeast Asia called the Golden Triangle: The mountains between Burma, Thailand and Laos. If you're interested in a w archable actioner on the topic, check out Bruce Lee's *B.L.A. CK SPOT* (1990). As for *GOLDEN TRIANGLE*, if it's terrible acting and worse dubbing doesn't get to y ou, the slow pace and generally uninteresting approach most certainly will. Though there are a couple lame fights, this is no martial arts film; there are also a few uninteresting shootouts and a car chase. *GOLDEN TRIANGLE* is as enjoyable as sending your baby on a leisurely drive with Susan Smith.

Plot: Smugglers are transporting opium across Cambodia, Vietnam, Bakersfield or some such place. Lo Lieh plays an undercover agent, Tian Feng plays a villain. That's more inf o than you'll need to know about *GOLDEN SHOWER*, or whatever it's called. - *Damon Foster*

1990

花 心 少

HONG KONG PLAYBOY

Released (1991) by World Video, A Shaw Brothers Film, Presented by Run Run Shaw, Producers: Mona Ka Hee & Mona Fong, Starring Alexander Fu Sheng, Cherie Chung, Patrick Tse Yin, Shih Kien, and that fat dweeb from SNAKEPIST FIGHTER, etc, Reviewed by Damon Foster

If this early 1980s slapstick, romantic comedy is any indication, perhaps Fu Sheng was destined for hasbeondom, and that fatal car accident which claimed the lives of him and his brother shortly thereafter was the best way to preserve the memory of his career. His death was sad & tragic, but if nothing else, at least it keeps him remembered for his work in kung fu extravaganzas of the 1970s like *CHINATOWN KID*, *THE PROUD TWINS*, *FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH* and *THE FOUR ASSASSINS*; rather than stupid, low budget, modern day comedies of the 1980s, such as this one.

At first, this madcap farce had me a laughing, possibly more than once. There are a couple genuinely funny moments and some of the characters showed potential to being slightly interesting at times. But by the middle of the film, when the plot began getting more complex and additional characters were introduced, the script pretty much lost me to the point that I wasn't quite sure as to what the hell was going on. All I could tell was that some of it (whatever it was) was funny, some was boring, some was confusing. As is often the case for a diehard kung fu fan like me, my favorite scenes were its all-too brief fights, the inevitable staple of HK filmdom. Even in a non-martial arts flick like this, they still manage to squeeze in a brief spat or two. In this case, the three [out-of-place] kung fu sequences included:

1. The obligatory "kung fu disco dance" gag, ala Chen Yuet Sun's tacky bit in *THE THREE AVENGERS*.

2. Fu Sheng is teaching (rather brutally) some guy how to woo girls, accompanied by the old "Drunken Master/W ong Fei Hung" theme. Y ou know the song, right? Okay, I'll hum a f ew bars: "No w, now, now now now, now now." Oh w ell, that's ho w it sounds to me, so much for my career as a musician. I'll stick to poetry: "Roses are Red, V iolets are Blue, I am a Schizophrenic, and so am I!"

3. Shih Kien hires a team of hockey players to wipe out our heroes in a gym, so the good guys retaliate using tennis rackets and baseball bats. This goofy skurish is the highlight of *HONG KONG PLAYBOY*.

Fu Sheng and his fat friend (a familiar face in 1970s chop sockey comedies) are playboys. Fu Sheng, playing Ah Sheng, is wooing some attractive actress, only to be thwarted by his rival in love, Mr. Hua (Patrick Tse Yin). But in reality, Sheng has the hots for Cherie Chung (like there's a heterosexual male on the planet who doesn't), which gets to be a bit of a problem when he accidentally promises himself to the daughter of a mob boss played by Shih Kien. From then on, it's a question of dodging the wedding plans and getting back together with Cherie Chung. - *Damon Foster*

1990

伙 頭 福 星

SHOGUN & LITTLE KITCHEN

Released by World Video, Presented by Hoventon Films Productions Co. Ltd. in 1992, Produced by Laura Fu, Dir: Ronnie Yu, Starring: Yuen Biao, Leon Lai, Ng Man Tat, Jimmy Wang Yu, Lu Feng (aka Leo Fong), Liang Chua Jen, Reviewed by Damon Foster



This Chinese New Years movie is wholesome fun for the whole family—a family of deaf, blind morons, that is. The only reason I checked out this talky piece of crap was out of curiosity, I was interested to know why they used the word "shogun" in the title. Ev en after having sat through this uninteresting comedy/drama, I still recall no shogun. There are no shoguns, no samurais, and no Japanese. Its dramatic scenes are boring as hell (I take that back; hell sounds a lot more exciting than *SHOGUN & LITTLE KITCHEN*), and most of its comedy is unfunny and incomplete—like a series of jokes with no punchlines.

This simplistic farce is stretched & padded out; endless shenanigans at some countryside restaurant run by Ng Man Tat. Supporting actor Yuen Biao does acrobatic flips while serving food to customers, and gets promoted to go on tour. Meanwhile, after filler (more pathetic comedy in the marketplace restaurant and tons of dialogue which goes nowhere) and cliché-laden romance takes up most of this useless flick, we discover Jimmy Wang Yu & Liang Chia Jen are part of some mob that wants to buy the property, but of course, it's not f or sale. But don't e xpect any kung fu or worthwhile action; I didn't. I w as, however, expecting to stay awake. The not-so-grand finale has Yuen Biao rescuing Ng Man Tat from a burning building. - *Damon Foster*

FROM BEIJING WITH LOVE

Wm's Motion Picture, 1994, Starring Stephen Chiau (aka Steven Chow), Anita Yuen, Pauline Chan (aka Chan Pao Lin & Chan Bo Lin), Kar Ying Lau, Reviewed by Damon Foster

So this Steven Chow Sing Chi comedy is considered a James Bond spoof? I guess it just goes to show you how limited my James Bond knowledge really is, now that I think about it. I've always found it extremely difficult to sit through an entire James Bond flick. I did, however, find part of FROM BEIJING WITH LOVE's opening credits (typical silhouettes of girls dancing, ala THUNDERBALLS, BROWN FINGER, OCTOPUSSY, THE SPINE WHO LOVED ME, or whatever the hell they're called) to be kind of funny. There are a couple other laughs during FROM BEIJING WITH LOVE, but most of the time, I just plain didn't get it.

As a typical HK actioner, I guess it's about average. The gunplay offers way more bloodshed than I expected, and FROM BEIJING WITH LOVE is the goriest Stephen Chow comedy I've seen. The whole flick is uneven; one minute, there's some comedy then a little romance, and then it's time for some surprisingly out-of-place brutality and bloodletting (i.e. a gratuitous, senseless, scene of a man's death in a mall). This is not necessarily a complaint, but that's coming up next.

I'm afraid this is yet another movie to fail my "talky boredom test". There's a little more tedious dialogue than is necessary, and its slow pace got me ready to start yawning—action packed it is not. But on the plus side, for those who can get completely wrapped up and enthralled

by a movie, you'll find FROM BEIJING WITH LOVE to be well written, and with coherent continuity. That's fine & dandy if you prefer logic over sheer craziness, but for my taste (for what it's worth), I'll stick to Chau Sing Chi's older, madcap classics like LOVE ON DELIVERY and GOD OF GAMBLERS 3. However, I guess maybe FROM BEIJING WITH LOVE comes in third, about tying with MAGNIFICENT SCOUNDRELS. So in the long run, FROM BEIJING WITH LOVE is decent entertainment, there are a couple decent laughs and some cool special effects.

As is always the case, Steven Chau Sing Chi is cast with attractive female co-stars. In numerous films from his early 1990s Gambler movie phase, he shared the spotlight with Cheung Man, prompting rumors that their romance wasn't only on the big screen. He got to roll around with Amy Yip in MAGNIFICENT SCOUNDRELS, and his girlfriend in the hilarious classic LOVE ON DELIVERY was played by the beautiful, talented Christie Chung (aka Chung Lai Tai). As for FROM BEIJING WITH LOVE, he's teamed up with the somewhat more plain Anita Yuen (DAYS OF BEING DUMB, CEST LA VIE MON CHERI, TEARS AND TRIUMPH, THE CHINESE FEAT, HE AND SHE, and HE'S A WOMAN—SHE'S A MAN). Fortunately, the beautiful singer Pauline Chan Pao Lin (again wearing blue contact lenses, which I must admit, had me fooled

at first) has a supporting role as a villain with bionic tits. Other films she's been in include EROTIC GHOST STORY 3 and ESCAPE FROM BROTHEL. Some guy called Kar Ying Law appears briefly, and is probably the only character to do any martial arts, for what it's worth. He's also been in THE CHINESE FEAST, A CHINESE ODYSSEY II: CINDERELLA, and TRICKY BUSINESS.

Steven/Stephen Chow Sing Chi etc. plays a butcher at some marketplace in Red China, but, secretly, he's also a secret agent. Even as he takes his meat cleaver to pork on the greasy table of his disgusting day job, he acts semi-"Bond-ish", still drinking a martini! Finally he's hired to retrieve a valuable allosaurus skull stolen from some museum. During his less-than-dynamic adventures to retrieve the priceless fossil, he meets a number of gorgeous babes and manages to be funny—once or twice. There's a little gunplay, but our hero relies on his knives, a meat cleaver, and the obligatory gadgets, including a portable spring/platform which propels him over a wall so he can crash some party. At the climax, he finally locates the dinosaur bone and takes care of whatever villains haven't already killed each other, including a Chinese "jaws"/Richard Kiel-type guy and a couple people with robot-ish battle gear, or whatever. **1/2 - *DF*



FROM BEIJING
WITH LOVE
Far left & right:
PAULINE
CHAN
Top center:
KAR YING
LAW
Bottom center:
ANITA YUEN

EASY MONEY

Distributed by Pan-Asia Video, Dir. Simon Leung Starring Law Ka Ying, Francis Ng, Shing Fui On, and Amy Yip Chi Mei, Available from Tai Seng Video (170 South Spruce Ave. Suite 200, South San Francisco, CA 94080) (415) 871-8118, Reviewed by Damon Foster

CHINESE ODYSSEY 1:
PANDORA'S BOX

[PGHAI TAI SENG-DON YAO KEI SAI YAO KEI] Scholar Films Co. Ltd., 1995, Starring Stephen Chow & Ng Man Dai, Reviewed by Damon Foster

What the hell was this complex, confusing, meandering piece of cinematic ineptitude all about? It's

always been a fan of Monkey King movies, but this deceptive yawner is a far cry from MONKEY WAR, Japan's MONKEY ("Saiyuki") TV series and even the cartoon ALAKAZAM THE GREAT! This stupid farce is made an even bigger let down considering the supposed "Monkey King" (hah!) is played by HK's top comedian (sad to say), Steven Chau Sing Chi! Just how could they bung this one? I mean, think of it: legendary simian Sun Wu Kung (from Wu Cheng En's classic novel, *Journey to the West*) played by the talented star of such excellent comedies as GOD OF GAMBLERS 3 and LOVE ON DELIVERY! Logically, it just couldn't go wrong—that is, not unless they wanted to make it as tedious as possible, which they most certainly did. The film goes out of the way to be consistently unentertaining, of which it succeeds—beautifully.

If a few FX and other production values are okay, and there was one, maybe two decent laughs, but the writing & directing sucks, in my often scoffed at opinion. We're mislead into thinking Steven Chow Sing Chi is the Monkey King, when in fact he's only in full Sun Wu Kung attire for the first two or three minutes of the movie! The remainder is just another stupid 1990s period-fantasy, yet again ripping off the likes of A CHINESE GHOST STORY and of course, THE BRIDE WITH WHITE HAIR, possibly the most overrated thing since Michael Jackson.

Though endless unnecessary characters keep talking so we can squint at tiny subtitles (invisible behind dark backgrounds, of which there are plenty), I suspect this pointless romp has Stephen Chow as a mountain bandit who, unbeknownst to him, is actually a reincarnated Monkey King. His long time co-star (Ng Man Dai) is supposedly a reincarnated Piggy (aka Pa Cheh). Their troubles begin when a mysterious woman wanders into their camp, and she turns out to be some sort of demon. Throw in a spider lady and an army of buffalo demons from the original novel, and mix it up with the usual post-Tsui Hark style of stunning-cinematography-meets-lame-slapstick, and believe it or not, it's time to nap! So near as I can figure out, this boring talker is about the further adventures of Sun Wu Kung, still pursued by the same villains

he defeated about five hundred years before. But none of it makes any sense; they could have started & ended this chaotic mess at any point in the film and it wouldn't have mattered. * -DF

COMET BUTTERFLY & SWORD

[aka BUTTERFLY & SWORD] 1993, Youngzee Film & Video Inc., Exec. Prod. Chu Yen Ping Producers: Wade Yau, Pi Chien Hsin, Dir. Michael Mak, Cinematographer: Chan Wing Shi, Scriptwriter: Chong Ching Starring Tony Leung as Sing, Michelle Yeoh as Lady Ko, Joey Wong as Butterfly, Donnie Yen as Yip Cheung, Jimmy Lin as Prince Cha, Reviewed by Patricia Gonzales

COMET BUTTERFLY & SWORD is loaded with wire effects and further complicated by a semi-convoluted plot. But who cares? I loved this film! It is because of movies like this one that I endure movie houses with broken seats, loud winds and no heat. COMET BUTTERFLY & SWORD is a lavish sword fantasy packed with beautiful sets, gorgeous costumes and wild choreography (no this is not a Tsui Hark film). This movie is also a must see for fans of Michelle Yeoh who has never looked better. As Lady Ko, she dominates every scene she is in. Despite the merciless slaughter of her enemies (heads ripped off, bodies sliced, etc.), her character doesn't achieve villain status. This is partially due to the ongoing love triangle. Ko is in love with Sing (Tony Leung) who is happily devoted to Butterfly (Joey Wong). Meanwhile, Yip Cheung (Donnie Yen) is hopelessly in love with Lady Ko who ignores him unless they are on a mission. Throughout the carnage the characters manage to show their vulnerable sides. This aspect of the film prevented it from becoming another mediocre sword adventure. But it's the wild action in COMET BUTTERFLY & SWORD that will have you screaming for more. The clear bright picture quality is also a plus. If this is their standard, I hope Youngzee Video continues to release more HK films on VHS even if they are only the English dubbed versions.

A dying royal eunuch named Cho wishes to steal a letter sent by Lee Siu-Tin a government official to Sun Yu-Ba leader of the Sol Heights clan in which he reveals his plan to conquer the martial world. Cho hires Lady Ko, leader of the Happy Woods, a clan of swordsmen, who is more than happy to get the letter back as Sun Yu-Ba is her sworn enemy Yip Cheung, one of Lady Ko's men makes the first attempt to retrieve the letter but is wounded during the fight by two metal spikes shot into his shoulder by a mysterious metal claw. Lady Ko assigns the task to Sing, who gains Sun Yu-Ba's trust by

Perhaps "Easy Napping" would be a better title for this disappointing slapstick comedy. The script is yet another tale of inept comedy along the lines of Sam Hui's NAUGHTY NAUGHTY and Stephen Chow's MAGNIFICENT SCOUNDRELS, but not as sidesplittingly hilarious. Much of the humor in EASY MONEY (wasn't there also an American movie with Rodney Dangerfield that had the same title? If so, Dangerfield's flick is funnier) makes sense only to Chinese speakers & understanders, so the English subtitles are more strange than funny. Out of the humor which makes sense to us non-Chinese, a certain percentage can be dismissed as stupid. So what's left? Well, perhaps two or three decent laughs including an amusing karaoke scene and a dream sequence which spoofs A CHINESE GHOST STORY. Also got a slight chuckle out of its two satirical martial arts scenes (mainly spoofing Wong Fei Hung films, though set in modern times), though otherwise, this is not a kung fu movie or action movie at all.

Naturally, the video box shows Amy Yip looking delicious in a bikini, but her role in the flick is actually just a co-starring role, her screentime is smaller than the flick's three main male stars. Of course, even though these guys get top billing they aren't as dominant on the box. Regardless, Yip fans (being the entire male heterosexual population) will take note not only of her swimming pool scene, but will find her exotic dance in a nightclub to be equally drool-worthy!

Shing Fui On plays a good guy this time—well, sort of. He and a couple friends (roommates) owe some loan shark a lot of money, and try to raise the cash through various scandals (i.e. our brutish hero dresses up like a nun to collect supposed donations for disaster victims) which, occasionally have funny moments. Somehow somewhere, Amy Yip (who does a literal striptease, it's quite a tease) gets involved with these commies, and by the end of this quirky, nonsensical mess, she marries Shing Fui On, the lucky bastard. * -DF

stopping an attempt on his life. Impressed with his bravery, Sun invites Sing to stay at Sol Heights where he becomes one of his bodyguards. After several months of enduring Sing eyeing his lover Mr. Peony (who is actually Sing's childhood friend Ching), Sun sets up a wedding for the two. The honeymoon is short lived as it turns out that Ching was sent by Lady Ko to get the letter back. She is killed by one of Sun's henchmen during the attempt. Lady Ko takes the bull by the horns and attacks Sun's house just as he was planning to assault on her.

chan. She kills Sun and his men, and brings the letter to Cho who reveals that he had murdered Lee Su-Tin months earlier and only wanted the Happy Woods and Sol Heights to wipe each other out. The grand finale has Lady Ko, Sing and Prince Cha (the Emperor's cousin sent to keep an eye on Cho) raising hell with a not-so-sick-after-all Cho. Prince Cha bashes Cho in the head with an iron ball, Sing is launched (via Lady Ko) head first through Cho's body (and doesn't get a single drop of blood on him, wow!), Cha then blows apart Cho's head with a mighty kick, and Cheung slices his headless body to shreds, putting an end to the evil Eunuch once and for all ***1/2 - Patricia Gonzales

Limited. At times it damn near stinks, it's yet another routine, run-of-the-mill romance/comedy/action/drama that's virtually indistinguishable from many other HK movies of its type. The drama, despite legible subtitles is complex and uninteresting, and most of the comedy falls flat. It does offer a couple nice looking babes (including some blond caucasian martial artist that I thought was Sophia Crawford at first, but her name isn't in the credits and instead was the name 'Kundy?'), and for OC's ever increasing

only wire work is during the fight between Frankie Chan and that blonde I guess is called Kundy; and even then, the outrageous jumps are kept to a minimum. There's also a nifty sword duel between co-hero Frankie Chan and Norman Chu. Speaking of which:

It's a sad sign that the 1960s heroes like Frankie Chan (OUTLAW BROTHERS) and Norman Chu (TIGER ON BEAT, Tsui Hark's enjoyable WE'RE GOING TO EAT YOU ALIVE) are given smaller roles so that here-today-gone-tomorrow teen idol



Leon Lai can get top billing. Though he acts & fights well enough, I was always of the impression he was just more of a pop singer than anything. Norman Chu (aka Tsui Shu Keung) has never really been given a whole lot to do since his starring (as a hero!) role in 1989's BLOOD RITUAL.

Leon Lai stars as a Singapore cop intent on marrying a HK mobster's (Kent Chang) daughter played by Vivian Chow. Much of the running time deals with how the conniving father uses assorted tricks to keep the two separate (he doesn't want his daughter to marry a policeman). After plenty of foolery and maybe an honest laugh or two, it's revealed that a rival mob called the Tiger Society, lead by Flying Tiger (Norman Chu) wants revenge for the death of one of their brothers. Finally, I guess Kent

Chang's mob gets some respect for or Leon Lai because he's trying to rescue Vivian Chow's character, who has been kidnapped and tied to a dam by the Flying Tigers. The ending series of confrontations (kung fu, stunts, guns, some swordplay, explosions, toy race cars which explode; you know, the usual stuff) culminates in a gripping scene where our heroes are hanging from a dam, trying to climb up before a time-bomb (beneath them, in the water) goes off. *** -LF

female readership, the flick's lead star is HK heart-throb Leon Lai. So ignore the comedy & tedious drama, and tolerate this standard movie for that one thing which always has and always will make HK flicks stand out from the rest: Action! Though unevenly paced (though very even for haphazard HK standards), with lame comedy through out the beginning, it's the latter half when FUN AND FURY finally offers some fun, and fury too. Yes, of course there's spiffy kung fu stuntwork, and the

FUN AND FURY, an okay movie, is from Movie Impact Limited, which is only natural, since its slow beginning & middle proved that this Movie's Impact is indeed

FUN AND FURY

1991
Movie Impact

cast Ltd. Producer: Clarence Yip, Exec. Prod.: Wallace Cheung. Starring: Leon Lai, Vivian Chow, Sharon Kwok, Kent Chang, Frankie Chan, Norman Chu, Bruce Fontaine, and 'Kundy' (?). Review: used by Damon Foster

FUN AND FURY, an okay movie, is from Movie Impact Limited, which is only natural, since its slow beginning & middle proved that this Movie's Impact is indeed

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NEWS UPDATE:

DATELINE: HONG HONG; SUMMER '95

Well, as is pretty evident from most indications, things seem to be winding down in HK. Most of the stars we've come to enjoy from the '70s and '80s have all but disappeared from the spotlight, despite the fact that mainstream America is now paying more attention than ever to a certain scared little British colony. I'm of course referring to recent appearances by HK celebrities like Jackie Chan and Chow Yun-Fat on *GOOD MORNING AMERICA*, *MTV*, *ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT*, etc. Numerous articles in U.S. publications like *TIME*, *INSIDE KUNG FU*, *IMAGI-MOVIES*, *SHE*, *FILM QUARTERLY*, *FEMME FATALES*, *IN CAMERA* etc., as well as the continuing film-fests, newspaper articles, bootleg video dealers, and of course, fanzines. For mainstream America I have this to say: "Too late, too late!" But for the rest of you CC readers, here's what's up in Hollywood East.

First, Jackie Chan's latest film, *RUMBLE IN THE BRONX*, may see a late summer release (after *WATER WORLD* sinks), possibly by the time you read this, via New Line Cinema in over 1,100 theaters. That's a lot of theaters, by the way. The tone of the film is a bit uneven, fluctuating from silly comedy to deadly serious (not quite as extreme as Chow Yun-Fat's *TREASURE HUNT*), but is still a fun ride in my opinion--with plenty of exciting action for Chan fans. The details of his four picture deal with New Line remain unclear though. Currently, he's finishing up work on a European filmed (I believe) race car flick. Hopefully Jackie will again enlist the services of ace car stunt coordinator Remy Julienne (*ARMOUR OF GOD*, *ONCE A THIEF*). The film co-stars talented new starlet Anita Yuen (who won "Best New Performer" at the 12th HK Film Awards, for her role in *DAYS OF BEING DUMB*), and Chin Kar Lok. Helping choreograph the action is none other than Sammo Hung, although it's unlikely of "Three Hairs" will appear in the film. Currently the English title is *THUNDERBOLT*, but they changed the Chinese title at least three times already, so who knows.

Rumor has it that Jackie is angry with Stallone. Newspapers state that Chan said, "Sly has no real plans or intentions of working with me. He's just throwing my name around for propaganda and self-promotion." Chan also met with Bruce Willis while he and Cindy Crawford were on the Planet Hollywood Tour in HK. Although no definite joint plans were announced, the two did acknowledge an interest in working together in the future. "Die Hard 4"? Nahhh!

In other news, sexy and engaged Maggie Cheung is doing a film with Chinese art film goddess Gong Li. Li has now separated from long time hubby director Zhang Yim-Mou (*JU JUI*, *RAISE THE RED LANTERN*). *TO LIVE* is their latest and last (?) collaboration. She's now seen around town with a young stud. Speaking of studs, Anita Mui recently spent a romantic vacation with the young hunk who played the monk in Tsui Hark's *GREEN SNAKE*. Maggie Cheung popped up this summer in a Jackie Chan music video, playing his girlfriend of course; after all, she is his favorite leading lady. The two are seen frolicking around his apartment in romantic soft-focus B&W. On other news, the bride with black hair, Bridget Lin Ching-His is expecting her first child in December, 1995. Congrats. (Who knows, maybe she subscribes to this maga-

DARREN WHEELING

zine?) Her opulent Los Angeles marriage in June '94 was one of the most celebrated weddings of any recent HK star. Jackie Chan and Sally Yeh recently recorded "Don't you Know", a duet to increase AIDS awareness and raise funds for research. The track appears on her new double gold CD box set "Best of '85-'95". Oddly enough, Sally & Jackie's real life bodyguard and onscreen nemesis Liu Chia-Hui smooth it up in one of her recent music videos. Although, for the most part Sally has stayed out of the spotlight this year. Most say it's because of the 'scandal' with her and George Lam Chi Cheung.

Another singer to watch for is Faye Wong. She began her professional singing career in the late 1980s as Shirley Wong, then changed her name to the more unique Faye (HK already has a Shirley Kwan). She fancies herself as an Asian Delores O'Riordan. In fact, she very faithfully covers the Cranberries "Dreams" (and wrote a Cocteau Twins tune which already sounded like scrambled Cantonese) on her 1994 release (with the B&W misspelled Chinese words all over the cover). Don't bother trying to memorize what she looks like, she'll only change her hair 'n' eye you see her again. She co-produces her albums and even writes some of her own material, which is unusual for HK singers. You might remember from *CHUNKING EXPRESS* with Bridget Lin Ching-His and Tony Leung Chiu Wai for which Tony won HK's Best Actor Award. Look for her excellent recent live concert video.

In case you didn't know, booklet HK laser disks are now streaming into the U.S. market. You'll pay about half the price (about 50 bucks or so) of a legitimate disk, but the quality suffers. And quality is the whole point of buying a freakin' disk in the first place, just so you know.

And finally, *The Encyclopedia of Martial Arts Movies* is now available. It's a bit pricey... (*That's putting it mildly*... 70 bucks!) It's full of mistakes (i.e. John Woo's *THE KILLER* does not contain nudity. I've seen all versions several times and believe me, no nudity; guns yes, blood yes, but nudity? Authors Bill & Karen Palmer must be stoned). But to be honest, I guess at 485 pages that's a lot of information to keep straight. After a while, I'm sure all those Prayin' Mantis styles start to look the same. Anyw'ay, although the Palmers aren't my favorite critics by a long shot, Ric Meyers is a welcome addition and to be frank--this book is a one of a kind... and probably will be for a long time. It's worth picking up, so long as you already know that *POLICE STORY 3 PART 2* and *ONCE A COP* were never alternate titles for Amy Yip's 1991 Grade III sci-fi & skin classic *ROBOTRIX* as this book would have you believe. It's being released through Scarecrow Press. And lastly to be on the mailing list for info on Jackie Chan's comic: Topp Comics, 1 Whitehall St., New York, NY 10004.

Until next time... and remember, we still have the classics--Darren Wheeling, Summer '95

KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE



Kaizo Ningen Update, sort of a condensed version of the magazine *Heroes on Film* was suppose to include a review of Saban's latest mutant, MASKED RIDER. But while I managed to stomach enough episodes of POWER RANGERS and VR TROOPERS to include reviews of them in previous editions of *Kaizo Ningen Update*, I must confess that I was so put off by KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX's bastard offspring (currently airing on the Fox network on Saturday mornings) that I would rather not sit through another episode; yes, it's that bad! Perhaps next issue, when I've gotten over the shock of this sacrilegious series, I'll get together enough nausea medicine to make an in-depth review feasible. From what I've seen so far, the American-shot footage of teens at school looks like Saban is blatantly ripping off SUPERHUMAN SAMURAI CYBER SQUAD and the even worse TATTOOED TEENAGE ALIEN FIGHTERS FROM BEVERLY HILLS! There's also some muppet-like character obviously inspired by ALF, E.T. THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL, and even HOWARD THE DUCK. Interesting to note that there is new footage of the two villains with moving mouths, shot by Americans, so that unconvincing dubbing isn't necessary. The more generic, costumed characters are from Japanese footage, and the intercutting between is distracting, as the film grain & lighting so obviously changes from shot-to-shot.



ちょうりきせんたい



HYPER POWERED TASK FORCE: OH-RANGER

(Full Japanese title "Chōyūriki Sentai Oh-Ranger") Toei, 1992. Broadcast on TV Asahi. Producers: Susumu Yoshikawa & Takayuki Suzuki. Created by Saburo Hattē. Music: Seiji Yokoyama. Action Dir.: Junji Yamashita (J.A.C.). Dir.: Takeshi Ogasawara & Shōhei Tōjo. Featuring: Hiroshi Miyauchi, and Masaru Kido as the red ranger, Kunio Masuoka as the green ranger, Ayumi Masei as the yellow one, Voice for Villain 'Emperor Bacchus Hood', Tōru Obira (previously SPACE GIANTS's Kodak, Kurata on SPECTREMAN and narrated for Sentai programs from GORANGER to DYNAMAN; Reviewed by Damon Foster

Here I go yet again. Once a year I check out Japan's currently airing Sentai clone, and thus, once a year I find myself writing the same basic review over, and over, and over again. My god, them toy companies will always have way more control over these programs than the artists who originally founded the genre back in the good old days of GO



RANGER (Toei, 1974). Hell, the production company, Toei, might as well start spelling their name Toy. Needless to say, OH (the "Oh" means two things: Oh means king in Japanese, and OH can be taken as an abbreviation, standing for "Over Tech"). I also noticed the rangers have a tendency to say "olay" like a bull-fighter) RANGER fails to be blazingly original, and is yet another predictable, cliché-packed, formula ridden ripoff, virtually no different than its ancestors KAKU RANGER, DAI RANGER, POWER RANGERS, ZYU RANGER, TURBO RANGER, etc. So plotwise, there's really not a whole lot to be said that hasn't been said dozens of times before: Five heroes, each a different color, uses their weapons & giant robots to protect Tokyo from monstrous invaders.

Since we all know and expect there to be virtually no difference between these repetitious Sentais, I'll at least try to concentrate on what few characteristics which, for better or worse, set this show aside (hah!) from the rest. The opening credits, for example, make use of split screens (almost like THE BRADY BUNCH, but with a catchier theme song) when introducing the characters. So four characters (pink, green, yellow & blue) are divided into groups of two, they must share space. So apparently, only the red ranger (Goro Hashino) and their commander (Miyuru Sanbarichyu), played by superhero veteran Hiroshi Miyauchi are worthy of their own private shots. Another point I noticed (and I'm getting extremely technogeekish here, it's hard not to when you scrape the bottom of the barrel for something to write about) is that before the opening credits, there are random clips & quick highlights of what's going to happen in that episode, ala KIKAIKA (though KIKAIKA is far more entertaining, to say the least). Even more pointless & trivial is that the commercials (for the ever-popular Korakuen stage shows) are now shot on video, not film, though I think that trend started last year with KAKU RANGER, or possibly even two years ago with DAI RANGER.

The success of those bastard stepchildren of Japan's Sentai, the highly over-rated Power Rangers is definitely hav-

ing some influence on the Japanese originators. It's weird to think that a mutant offspring & pale imitator such as them Power Rangers could actually have any effect on the parent programs at all! But it definitely seems to be the case. One major change I noticed is that all the villains in OH RANGER are costumed, robotic caricatures, and not the usual Japanese people (has Machiko Soga been replaced by machines too?) wearing silly costumes & makeup, trying to seem like exotic aliens while looking & sounding just as Japanese as our Tokyo-raised heroes. Though these ridiculous villainous cyborgs of Baranoya look like lame rejects from some stupid old Sid & Marty Kroft series (minus the emotional intensity and stunning Shakespearean performances), at least there's some credibility for once, the villains are definitely non-human invaders. This move is possibly Saban inspired, in case they wish to eventually bring this show to the U.S. as "Power Rangers: The Next Generation", "Power Rangers: Deep Space Ten", or whatever. After all, it's much easier to dub fake robots than Japanese actors, and this is all the better to fool American spoidbratdom into thinking it's an all-American series, without any of them foreign, slanty eyed Japanese getting in the way.

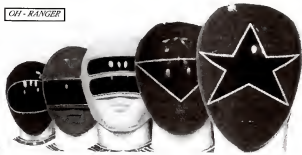
On a more positive note, I think maybe the exceptional battles of POWER RANGERS have rubbed off on OH RANGER, since the quality of OH RANGER's fights is much better than most of the more recent duels seen on Japanese TV. Though nowhere near as exciting as those in SUN VULCAN or DYNAMAN (still the cream of the crop, in my worthless opinion), it's evident that all five actors have at least some martial arts and/or athletic skill, making many of the confrontations a lot of fun, more so than the chop-edit crap of late 1980s & early 1990s Sentai programs. So I guess the people at the Japan Action Club

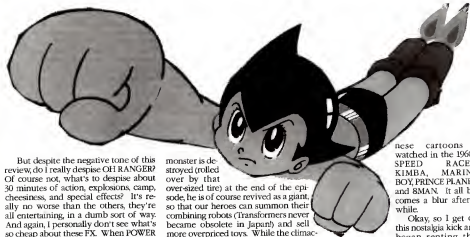
didn't want to be outdone by the Hollywood fight crew under Jeff Pruit, and decided it was about time to remember that after all, it was the Japanese who invented karate, why should they continue to let Saban's employees blow them away? Even so, censorship is still rampant on Japanese TV (and is slowly taking over American TV too; just watch, I doubt highly that in a couple years, POWER RANGERS will have the fights & thrills it has today; assuming it stays on the air that long), so despite the acrobatic battles performed by our young Japanese stars, these fights still tend to be short compared to that of SUN VULCAN (Toei, 1981) or GOGGLE V (Toei, 1982), and often, the camera simply pans across the whole fight, all in one take, so we don't always get a good look at each fighter in action.

This is not to say that the martial arts in OH RANGER are entirely equal with those in POWER RANGERS. While POWER RANGERS seems to have more exciting choreography (even if kicks to the face aren't permitted in this American hybrid), at least the skirmishes in OH RANGER have a variety of locales; the Oh Rangers tackle henchmen & robots in office buildings, railroad yards, laboratories, factories, forests, beaches and who knows what else. However, POWER RANGERS, from what I've seen, almost always has the exact same setting (a park, with a recognizable picnic table in the background) in each fight.

The only episodes I've seen of OH RANGER were some of the earlier ones. Later in the series, they added a sixth hero, of course. He has a black costume and is called King Ranger. Available photos imply King Ranger takes part in some breath-taking battles, but also there's another (hopefully temporary) new character, some sappy little girl (perhaps another space princess?) and her little cute pet dinosaur that looks like the plush animal that it is.

OH - RANGER





But despite the negative tone of this review, do I really despise OH RANGER? Of course not, what's to despise about 30 minutes of action, explosions, camp, cheesiness, and special effects? It's really no worse than the others, they're all entertaining, in a dumb sort of way. And again, I personally don't see what's so cheap about these FX. When POWER RANGERS came to America, critics whined about its supposed "low production values". Maybe I've watched too much of this 'cheap' Japanese stuff and have become brainwashed or too accepting of these supposed "low budget" special effects. When I think of low budget, I think of PLAN NINE FROM OUTERSPACE, ROBOT NINJA or the average Filipino movie. For those who don't know, there's nothing cheap about miniature props, superhero costumes, designing a new monster each week, explosions galore, trampoline stuntwork, and super imposed visuals (lasers, fire, etc.), and even the increasing use of computer FX. As standard sci-fi action, OH RANGER manages to entertain, even if it lacks originality and integrity.

Is there really any point in me rehashing this plot again? What the hell, the gaudy, monstrous robots (Hysteria, Fundo, & Blue Tondo) of some empire called Baranoya are up to no good, so the heroic squad of Oh Ranger, a division of the United Air Force are up to yes good. Our five heroes are Oh Red (Goro), Oh Green (Shohei), Oh Pink (Momo), Oh Yellow (Jyuku; a hot babe!), and Oh Blue, I don't know his human name. When not in their raygun blasting, swordswinging, acrobatic kicking, stereotypical superhero costumes, they more-or-less look like another Science Patrol, except that they all ride motorcycles. The idea of this average program has them dealing with the henchmen & robot/monsters of Baranoya. The way they kill the guest monster is pretty ridiculous, the red ranger (Oh Red) gets inside a giant tire (dropped from a mechanical bird, like an egg) and runs over the villain! Hit & run! After the episode

monster is destroyed (rolled over by that over-sized tire) at the end of the episode, he is of course revived as a giant, so that our heroes can summon their combining robots (Transformers never became obsolete in Japan!) and sell more overpriced toys. While the climactic battle of mechanical giants is full of decent pyrotechnics and super impositions, it's hard to forget the stupid gimmick which enlarged the supposedly dead villain in the first place. After his 'death', another robot always flings a little robot at the exploded carcass, who energizes it and makes it get really big, and alive once again. Talk about scraping the barrel, I wish this genre had died out ten years ago when there were still a few cool ideas left -- *Damon Foster*

ASTROBOY

(Japanese title: "Tetsuan Atomu", which means "Mighty Atom") 1964. Created & Animated by Osamu Tezuka. Written & Dir: Fred Ladd, Editor Pablo Zavala, Music: Tatsuo Takai, Lyrics: Don Rockwell, Produced by Musubi Productions Inc. Reviewed by Damon Foster

Now come on, is there anybody out there unfamiliar with this classic Japanese cartoon series? Like the original SPEED RACER, its being Japanese didn't keep it from becoming a nostalgic part of American pop culture. Hell, if I had to name just one Asian thing as the first ever in my life, it would have to be this show, it even predated my exposure to ULTRAMAN. As a tiny tot, I always watched ASTROBOY when it came on, but it was never really one of my top favorites. I do remember having an ASTROBOY dream when I was about four years old, but the dream wasn't very spectacular; basically just Astroboy flying, like he always does in the show. If nothing else, this dream is the oldest dream in my memory. Anyway, my hazy memory of the series is obscured by hazy memories of so many other Japa-

nese cartoons I watched in the 1960s: SPEED RACER, KIMBA, MARINE BOY, PRINCE PLANET and BMAN. It all becomes a blur after a while.

Okay, so I get on this nostalgia kick and began renting this show now that it's

available on pre-record. ASTROBOY is more-or-less as I remembered it, except that the scripts seem remotely intelligent, it's a sure bet I couldn't tell what the hell was going on when I watched it as a four-year-old! But its interesting stories don't make this a very intellectual program, after all, it's a kiddie show, 100%. So to get wrapped up in its unique, well-written scripts, you gotta tolerate corny voices and Daffy Duck-inspired art. The drawings aren't exactly great, and their humorous design (and the antics of the characters) remind me of typical Bugs Bunny style cartoons, but not as funny. Whether or not this was an intentional inspiration I don't know, but there are definite similarities. As I understand it though, the late Osamu Tezuka also created a live action TETSUAN ATOMU movie and comicbook which predated the show, so the similarities to the comedic antics of the Luney Tunes cartoons may be coincidental.

The English version's theme song was supposedly sung by a group of kids in 1964 calling themselves The Cosmic Rangers. These kiddies can't sing ("There you go, Astro Boy! On your flight into space! Rocket high! Through the sky! What adventures you will face!" etc.) worth a damn, and remind me of the similarly inept themes for SANTA CLAUS CONQUERS THE MARTIANS and GUMBY. But their crudeness adds unintended humor, so I'll take it over the original Japanese kiddie theme any day I happen to be sober (days of which are becoming more and more scarce as loved ones have stabbed me in the back and my life has become a living hell; but

that's irrelevant, this magazine is called **ORIENTAL CINEMA**, not **DAMON'S LIFE SUCKS**).

As someone who's memory of watching **ASTROBOY** in the 1960s is next to nothing, and having grown up on later, cliché-ridden, formula-laden superhero programs, **ASTROBOY**'s comparatively unpredictable approach was like a breath of fresh air. This groundbreaking program was made before the bulk of Japanese superheroes, and therefore the episodes don't always involve a set pattern, there are plot twists and occasional surprises. This creative, unique approach wouldn't last in Japanese superheroism for long, since later programs like **ULTRAMAN** and **MAZINGA Z** offered a more structured, set pattern. I'm not complaining about the later TV shows (anybody who knows me, knows I take to **KAMEN RIDER** and **ULTRAMAN** like alley-cats take to the garbage dumpster out back, behind the circumciser's office), but their repetitious approach automatically makes their viewers feel like psychics who can foretell the future.

ASTROBOY is still entertaining, even today, but I don't know if its outdated plots and B&W format would get appreciation from the children of today who have been spoiled by **POWER RANGERS**. Seen today, **ASTROBOY** is of course, tacky & campy, but then, I imagine that's intentional, even back in 1964, I can't see anyone taking this comedic program seriously. It doesn't have the seriousness, logic or suspense of **SPEED RACER**, but then, it's not a complete laugh riot and unintentional comedy like **8MAN**. As for the quality of artwork and animation, I think it kind of sucks (though I've seen worse, **CRUSADER RABBIT** for example, and the later **POPEYE** cartoons). The series has poor (generally lacking) sound effects, and it does get rather tedious with Astroboy always running out of power, often needing a quick fix from another robot or whatever generator is around. The quality of the fist fights, when they actually happen, isn't very exciting, more like a goofy Popeye-against-Bluto duel than anything else.

What follows are individual episode reviews of whichever ones I had time to rent & watch; these are actually the first ten tapes (two episodes each)—the only ones available at the local video store. If there are more in existence, I've not found them.

1. THE BIRTH OF ASTROBOY

It's the year 2000. Dr. Boynton, a wacky scientist invents robot Astroboy to replace his son, killed in a car crash.

But when he realizes this young robot won't grow, he sells him to the circus, where he must battle bigger robots to the 'death', in a gladiator-like arena! Fortunately, regular character Dr. Elefun is introduced, and points out that the robots of the world have protested their being treated like slaves, and a Robot Bill of Rights frees Astroboy of the cruel ring-leader! **

2. THE MONSTER MACHINE

Alien Org from the planet Numin Lumin tricks an Earth scientist and his oriental assistant ('ah-so') into building a destructive giant robot with tentacles! It teleports the invading alien to Earth to lead an all out attack on the city. Org is actually a mental case from his planet, shunned by his people for being stupid, having a mere IQ of 200! Anyway, the kind aliens of Numin Lumin supply Astroboy with an 'Ultra Gun' which aids in the defeat of villainous Org and his Monster Machine. **

3. THE TERRIBLE TIME GUN

Evil scientist Dr. Tampo uses a Time Gun to send Astroboy & Dr. Elefun back to the Middle Ages, where they deal with jousting, kings, knights & a wizard, plus a robotic invasion from the 21st century. Oodles of plain dumb, stupid fun. ***

4. ONE MILLION MAMMOTH SNAILS

Another wacky scientist is up to no good, in this case, his large mutant garden (huge fruits & vegetables) offers a dangerous side effect. Gigantic snails which look more like giraffes with shells. The inept military commander's plans fail to destroy these marauding giants, so Astroboy uses the logical solution: Salt! **1/2

5. SUPER BRAIN

This is an imaginative episode involving a brain surgeon and a giant robot called Monstro. But much is left unexplained in this confusing mess, which also seems to have something to do with some rich bankrobber. *

6. MYSTERY OF THE AMLESS DAM

Enjoyable, amusing statement against bigotry: vigilante bands of humans (led by gangsters) unite and uprising to drive all the robots out of town! The episode is as weird as always, with robots dressing as ghosts to scare off their attackers, but it's entertaining as hell. ***

7. THE MAGIC PUNCH CARD

Evil Dr. Andre Gravitator tampers with the work of rival scientist Dr. Neutron, resulting in an out-of-control factory controlled by an electronic brain. The hay-

wire computer sends out missiles and robots, so Astroboy confronts it and says "Hello. Please excuse me, Electronic Brain, but I have to break you up because you're bad." Another amusing scene has the whole factory go haywire and the building flops around on the sand like a beached octopus. **

8. THE GREAT ROCKET ROBBERY

Here's one of my personal favorites, it's entertaining with plenty of action. Mr. Pomposus is kidnapped by evil Dr. Goldthumb, who plans to steal gold from the planet Mars! Goldthumb has also created robots like Fireball and the ESP-gifted Future, who looks like an adult Astroboy. But Future can't help it, he wants to be a good guy! So he sacrifices himself to defeat his corrupt creator in space. ***

9. SHIPWRECKED IN SPACE

This episode actually #63 in the series, though the tapes seem to be released out-of-sequence) sets it, I'm convinced the program's writer is on acid! This weird, silly tale starts with some thugs hijacking a cop car that looks like a dog's head, and they, like Astroboy end up on a space-bound rocket that strands them at some space station. Before the episode ends, see: 1. Aliens & crooks fight over food. 2. Thugs try and lose weight (rigorous exercising) so a low-on-fuel rocketship can carry them home. 3. Aliens hire a crook to be their cook, but he gets furious when they only give him left-overs. 4. Aliens have a special antidote for 'tummy aches'. The aliens and their robot henchmen look pretty stupid. The episode is great fun for the sheer stupidity of it! Classic line, as delivered by the leader alien: "Listen to me you Earthlings. You let us drink honey & vinegar that wasn't any good, and I want revenge!" **1/2

10. GIFT OF ZEO

Nasty tightwad Mr. Pinchpenny and a corrupt politician unearth ZEO, a giant robot & savior from some ancient (but extinct), advanced civilization. This is an interesting, cool episode. It's got social statements, some fist-fighting and even a little blood (righteous contractor Mr. Markham receives a bullet to the shoulder)! Though released on Tape 5 (following #63 SHIPWRECKED IN SPACE), this is actually the 99th episode (I assume not all the episodes were available for release; that's why I'm seeing varied stories—whatever episodes were obtainable). ***

11. THE MYSTERY OF THE METAL MAN

Despite the chaotic order they're re-

leasing them in, this is actually episode #97! A powerful explosion seems to transport Astroboy into an alternate dimension where nobody (including series regulars Elefun, Pompous & Boynton) knows him. There's an extended (yet amusing) song & dance routine called "Oh My Oh MY", but the villainous space robots look cool, so the episode is decent **1/2

12. GANGOR, THE MONSTER

Despite its being the 12th episode released (on Tape #6), this 15th chapter tells us about the "46 Wrestling Robots" who never wrestle, yet combine to form a jewel-snatching, giant centipede who scares passengers aboard an ocean liner ***

13. BROTHER JETTO

Another weird yet funny episode (#84, Tape #7). It starts with an intro/narration where Astroboy (against a live action background of a house) is approached by some actor hoping to audition for the role of Astroboy's brother in this story! But Astroboy insists his brother Jetto plays himself! Astroboy's quest for his long-lost brother is made all the more humorous with occasional offbeat comedic skits, including a sexy female rhino doing the hula, and a robot battle so intense they rip the film (we see the sound-bar & sprocket holes) and everything goes black! ***

14. DOGMA PALACE

Episode #53 deals with the subterranean nation of Antulia, and its being overrun by monstrous bees. Features the usual robot battles and a couple unexpected laughs, but one scene was obviously edited for the American version: A brief glimpse of a firing squad executing a small group of men! **1/2

15. MISSION TO THE MIDDLE OF THE WORLD

This one (#65) is the first of two on Tape #8. Astroboy, Astrogirl (his sister) and a convincing reporter venture underground and encounter an ancient, subterranean civilization of primitives, descendants from Atlantis. Little more than an ASTROBOY version of AT THE EARTH'S CORE and AFRAGON - it's anticlimactic and basically fails to deliver. **1/2

16. THE MAD BELTWAY

A corrupt designer of cars (he's more concerned with profits than safety) stalks the chief engineer of a freeway construction site, using the ominous logo The Ace of Spades (the death card) as part of his intimidating messages. Though it culminates

with fairly typical battles between Astroboy and monstrous tank/vehicles, this episode (#76) is intelligently written with a few interesting messages. ***

17. THE HOOLIGAN WHODUNNIT

The Hooligans, a masked gang of vigilantes is out to destroy any & all robots. A confusing script is made all the more sillier by pointless filler about whales & elephants, though the trick ending (a boy discovers, much to his dismay, that not only was he adopted, but his adopted, long lost mother turns out to be a robot) is kinda' clever, almost making this 68th episode enjoyable. **1/2

18. THE RETURN OF CLEOPATRA

This episode (#45) follows #68 on Tape #9. I really got a kick out of this Egyptian adventure, especially Dr. Elefun's talk with a camel (who smokes cigarettes, you think maybe they're spoofing Camel brand cigarettes). There are other jokes, that prankster Osamu Tezuka wrote his first name and "Musiproductions" on Egyptian writing on a pyramid wall. Nasty guy Raspetin creates robots to conquer Egypt, including a Cleopatra look-alike (to fool & control the Arabs) and a couple sphinx-like giants for Astroboy to battle. **1/2

19. INCA GOLD FEVER

Flying pyramids! Goofy one-liners! Superb artwork! A laughing whale! A guy gets shot dead! It's all here in this tale of an exploitive, greedy scientist who's invention enhances the magic powers of an ancient Incan civilization eager to retrieve their stolen gold. This is Episode #66, the first of two on Tape #10, followed by Episode #09, HULLA-BALOO LAND. ***

20. HULLA-BALOO LAND

A pre-WESTWORLD amusement park (called Hullabaloo Land) where robots do role playing for medieval settings, exhibits and act out storybook fairy-tales (ie the ballet "Swan Lake") is the setting for this cute little fantasy. The park's tyrannical leader takes Dr. Elefun on a tour, and when they reach a haunted cemetery, the following dialogue takes place...Dr. Magical "Now we're in the land of horrible creatures! Goblins, vampires, candy thieves, spooks, and tax collectors!" Dr. Elefun: "Aaah, they're the worst." Later, Astroboy discovers their cruel host is holding a Swan Princess captive, and when he goes on a rescue mission, Dr. Elefun says: "I have a meeting with the society for prevention of cruelty to Astroid Beetles. You'll have to go alone." So once he re-charges his energy, Astroboy defeats the magical



kingdom's mechanical dragon, "Fire Snout." **1/2



BEETLE FIGHTER

(aka "Bi Fuitta", which means "B-Fighter"; full Japanese title "Jiyuukou Bi Fuitta", which means "Heavy Armor Beetle Fighter") Produced by Toei in 1995, Producer Nagafumi Hori (a former director, Creator Saburo Hattie, Music: Eiji Kawamura, Action Dir. Toshiro Takeda (JAC), Dir: Taro Sakamoto, Starring Daisuke Tsuchiya (twice one of the Dai Ranger actors) as Takuya Kai/Blue Beet, Shigeru Kanai as Daisaku Katagiku/G-Flag, Reina Kazuki as Rei Hayama/Reddle, Reviewed by Damon Foster

First of all, the title of this series may cause some confusion. Though the series has yet to (if ever) be released in English, it does feature "Beetle Fighter" clearly written in English letters at the beginning of the opening credits, though the Japanese katakana spells it "Bi Fuitta". I guess they abbreviated it for Japanese pronunciation (I've seen no episodes which have people say "beetle", or "Bitoru", as them Japanese over in Japan would pronounce it) because it's easier for them to say. However, the three characters are definitely inspired by beetles.

their battle armor clearly resembles that of rhinoceros beetles, at least their helmets do.

Whether you call it "Beetle Fighter", "Bi Fualta", "Bitoru Fighter", or "My Dog has No Nose", this innovative (sort of) series represents the current evolutionary link in a genre that all stared out in the early 1980s (see 1994's OC#2, The Robo Hero issue for a complete filmography & guide to the genre). The genre in question, often labeled "Metal Hero", "Rescue Mission", and of course "Robo Hero" seems to be going full circle, it's evolving back to its original "Uchu Keiji" ("Space Sheriff") roots, after a five year (at least) phase which concentrated on ROBOCOP ripoffs (ROBOCOP itself is a ripoff, and as such, fits in this mutant genre perfectly) involving stiff-limbed automations who fire guns and rescue people in trouble. There are, of course, still traces of that in BEETLE FIGHTER, since very little in the slow-paced world of Japanese superheroism changes over night, these alterations are gradual, taking years to evolve.

The eventual change is a welcome one, in my often-scoffed-at opinion. It's been a while since a program of this nature regularly pitted heroes in fist-fights against monsters, but this seems to be a main part of BEETLE FIGHTER. Of course, the heroes do have that same slow, automated strut, and make heavy use of guns, swords, spaceships and/or jet planes, but it's not uncommon to see a brief glimmer of hand-to-hand combat, in the tradition of 1971's KAMEN RIDER, which founded the whole genre, and its various offshoots. While BEETLE FIGHTER is basically blown away by its cool predecessors like SPACE SHERIFF GAVAN and SPACE SHERIFF SHARIVAN, I was relieved that it seems to have more action than the last few

"Metal Hero" and/or "Robo Hero" programs. Uninformed Americans who are still unfamiliar with the Robo/Metal Hero genre may wish to check out Saban's bastardized VR TROOPERS, as it features spliced shots from three Japanese (1980s) examples of the genre



SPIELVAN, METALDER and SHAIDER.

Naturally, the return to a "good-hero-against-bad-monster" plot may annoy those who appreciated the more unique, more realistic, "Rescue Mission" approach seen in WINSPECTOR, EXCEED DRAFT, SOLBRAIN and other pre-BEETLE FIGHTER programs. Yep, I'll admit that the "battles" theme makes BEETLE FIGHTER look a lot more like an average Sentai (OH-RANGER, KAKU RANGER, DAI RANGER, ZYU RANGER, POWER RANGERS, etc) team, as it too deals with a squad of streamlined, superheroes who protect Japan against invading monsters. This is probably the first time the genre came so close to the traditional "battle hero" (I don't know what else to call it) format. The previous program's BLUE SWAT (Toei, 1994) offered a hint of this type of action, but before that was 1993's JAN PERSON, basically a solitary hero. Years before JAN

PERSON was the 1980s program JIBAN (accidentally excluded from OC's Robo Hero issue, how stupid of me), which was a blatant ripoff of ROBOCOP, except that he shot his gun at monsters.

Personally, I was semi-impressed by BEETLE FIGHTER. Though it doesn't stand out from the other programs, it seems less boring than JAN PERSON, and less predictable than WINSPECTOR. As always, there's an abundance of special effects computer graphics, pyrotechnics, superimpositions (aka visuals), and last but not least, several monster costumes. This week, the monsters are only somewhat silly (as opposed to those in OH-RANGER, which are completely ridiculous), the worst one looking like the alien in Schwartzengger's PREDATOR, except that he wears sunglasses and acts as idiotic as the rest of these over-acting alien villains.

Other high points include the usual high-tech weapons and vehicles (a subterranean drilling tank called Staga Tank, an air vehicle called Red Jyro, to name exactly two) obviously designed by toy companies, and there are even henchmen villains! This means they should have some totally awesome, Sentai-like battles, but our heroes rarely take on squads of henchmen. As for the heroes, there's a blue one called Blue Beet (Takuya Kai, when out of costume), a green one called G-Stag (Daissaku Katagiku), and a red female called Reddle (Rei Hayama). The invaders are some sort of demonic and/or outerspace empire called "Jyamaru Gundan" (which means the "Jamal Army") and their highest ranking creatures are Shiyubu Arutsu, Gigarō, Jyura, Gaomu, and probably a few other names I'm spelling incorrectly too. ** *Damon Foster*

ASIAN ODDITIES

plague of Godzilla newsletters. For diversity, I began writing about lots of Japanese cartoons, but it wasn't long before such reviews became obsolete, thanks to an overabundance of cartoon rags which suddenly popped up out of nowhere. A new genre was chosen, that being Chinese kung fu movies, which I began to regularly cover along side the Japanese sci-fi flicks OC was known for. Unbeknownst to me at the time, there was already a kung fu fanzine underground thanks to such ahead-of-their-times publications as *Fangraphic* and *The Jade Screen*. Eventually I discovered these zines and realized I wasn't alone in my coverage of chop socky flicks. So it was once again time for OC to move along to the next genre. In the mid-1980s, HK action movies (descendants of the 1970s chop socky stuff) proved to be an entertaining new genre to cover in OC, though I never completely neglected older genres

like Japanese sci-fi, cartoons and kung fu oldies. But guess what? It wasn't long before the so-called 'New Wave' of HK movies caught the attention of other magazines, and it's a mainstream fandom which flourishes to this day. Naturally, there was no point in remaining exclusively in a genre that the trendy magazines were just discovering. So once more, it was time to jump ahead of the rest and cover another neglected genre; and that neglected genre was Japan's live action superheroes. So for years, OC was virtually the only English-language magazine to include the many thrilling hero programs from Japan. But once again, history repeats itself. When *POWER RANGERS* finally (a little late, to say the least) came into existence, along with it came a bunch of fanzines & magazines all trying to jump on the Japanese superhero bandwagon. So yet again, the imitators have caught up with OC. Or have they?



Beyond a doubt, this here Asian Oddities column is the most unusual column to appear in OC, but since reader response to it has been positive if at all (most people are still afraid to write to me, as though I'm gonna scratch their eyes out through the mail- I've tried, but it only works in person). But let me explain how this 'odd' column came about. OC started out in the 1970s, under such titles as *Japanese Movie Sci-Fi*, *Japanese Monsters*, and *Japanese Monsters and Superheroes*. By the late 1970s, Japantasy zines put out by Toho fans were more widespread than used band-aids in Bosnia. So by the early 1980s, I decided a new approach was needed to make OC stand out from the endless



W. LITTLEWOOD-CROSSING



again, only ones which deal with martial arts or some other Far Eastern aspect. A couple issues ago, I reviewed Pat Blislow's video short, ADVENTURES OF EL FRENETICO AND GO-GIRL. Though it didn't exactly keep me on the edge of my seat, it was most definitely one of the better no budget videos I've sat through. Those who liked this quirky video and its starlet Frances Lee will be pleased to know Blislow has put Lee in his new video called WHITEWOOD CROSSING. The production should be complete and for sale by the time you read this, so write to Amusement Films, C/O Just Kids, 310 New York Ave., Huntington, NY 11743, or call (212) 388-2319. Available photos (three actresses in fighting stance) imply there might be a little kung fu, but the premise seems to concentrate on vampires. What little "making of" footage I've seen looks impressive, nearly professional. In one scene, Frances Lee collides with the hood of a speeding car, one of the better stunts

I've seen in an amateur video.

Another American movie in the works which may be of interest is MANSAYER, a martial arts movie based on a book (called Sick) by horror & suspense novelist Jay Bonansinga. "I'm influenced by Chinese Martial Arts Films, especially HK films. While Bonansinga's recognition has come from his success as a writer of mature horror projects, his ongoing interest in dynamic action films provides a unique blending of genres that Eastern films seem to be more adept at providing. Jay Bonansinga is currently on tour to promote his book Sick, and distribution & casting details for MANSAYER are being negotiated. His previous film work has involved independent, award winning shorts and commercial work.



From India:

KHOONI MURDAA
India: 1988, Directed by Mohan Bhakri, Starring: Deepak Parashar, Javed Khan, Shree Pradha, Meethee,

Reviewed by Massimo Lavagnini

A sex maniac, Rejeed, loves to offer a red rose to the girls, before killing them. Put under arrest by the police and committed to a mental hospital, the mustached dude manages to escape, but he's beaten to death and burned alive by a group of

teenagers. From this moment on, the movie limits itself to propose again with no fantasy, a summary of the feats of Freddy Krueger in the first four chapters of his American saga: The tongue which comes out from the receiver, the boy hanged with a blanket in jail, the girl menaced in the bathtub. All without a scrap of originality. -Massimo Lavagnini



From the Philippines (?)

HORROR OF THE BLOOD MONSTERS

Distributed by Independent International Pictures Corp, Copyright 1970 Tal Productions. Produced & Dir: Al Adamson, Starring: John Carradine, Robert Dix, Vicky Wolante, Roy Benson, Jennifer Bishop, Bruce Powers, Fred Meyers, Britt Semand, Reviewed by Christopher Elam

Footage from some obscure B&W Filipino film is incorporated into this American-produced horror/sci-fi stinker. It opens with an oh-so cheap terror spree by vampires sporting fake fangs. Meanwhile, a narrator with a "vampiric" voice tells us that the origins of vampires can be traced to outer space! Scientist John Carradine and a crew of losers hop into their spaceship and rocket to the vampire planet. They encounter dinosaurs and other monsters on that weird planet, not to mention some mostly unfriendly natives.

Man, is this movie boring. Director Al Adamson managed to make a similar patchwork movie, DRACULA VS. FRANKENSTEIN, into a fairly entertaining flick. However, he really dropped the ball on this one. Our so-called heroes spend most of the film staring at scenes from other movies. They rarely do anything exciting. Even John Carradine doesn't help matters. He's amusing as the perpetually complaining scientist, but he's only in the movie for maybe ten minutes. It's really disappointing when the star doesn't show up for most of the movie.

I guess the main point of interest here is all that stock footage. As mentioned a couple of paragraphs ago, scenes are taken from some mysterious film, probably from the Philippines. Does anyone out there know anything about this enigmatic movie? (DF here. I think this classic unintentional comedy was padded out with footage from some weird Filipino caveman movie, though I don't know for a fact whether the original Filipino flick itself was ever actually completed. (Filipino video stores in my area only have the most current or semi-current circa post-1985 films, it's impossible to find something from the 1960s or

At the time of this writing (I mean typing, or rather, word processing), I've not seen any of the other rags offer regular coverage of Filipino & Korean films, which OC has been doing for years. Asian Oddities will continue to seek out the obscure, unusual flicks that most of the rival mags haven't covered...yet. Asian Oddities is the "anything goes" column for OC. With this column, I hope to officially open the doors to any film with a Far East angle, not just oriental movies, but even American and European ones—so long as they involve martial arts or Asian input of some kind. But there's more to Asian Oddities than satisfying my personal ego; I think it's useful to the reader in much the same way that any column is. An excellent example was when I trashed KING KUNG FU a couple OCs ago. If I saved one person a buck by telling them to avoid this worthless amateur movie, the review, though of an American film, was well worth it. A similar case would be with INVASION, should I ever locate & review this slow-paced drama. This sci-fi talker had me fooled as a kid, I tuned in and saw oriental people in a flying saucer, and thought I had stumbled upon another Japanese SF adventure! But despite a starring role by Yoko Tani, INVASION turned out to be just a dull, B&W American or European snore-a-thon which just happened to feature Asian cast members.

Another highlight is amateur videos which I hope to cover in this column. But



HORROR OF THE BLOOD MONSTERS

1978: *It's too bad, I mean, I'm curious to know what idea it was to do a movie about fanged cavemen, cavemen with animal tails, etc. The flick is only worthwhile for a cave-babe or two. -DF/* The sequences which are recycled show the otherworldly natives battling bizarre critters like a lobster-man and bat-men. The costumes are pretty nice and I suspect the whole movie is kinda' fun. But the impact is deadened in this yawn-inducer. Also turning up are the photographically-enlarged lizards (excuse me, I mean "dinosaurs") of ONE MILLION B.C. (1940), a movie that was ancient even when BLOOD MONSTERS was produced. You might be wondering how the makers of BLOOD MONSTERS used all of this B&W footage in their color movie. Well, they tinted the scenes different colors (red, yellow, etc.) and they wrote these color changes into the script. They tried to pass this deception off as a new filming process by calling it "Spectrum X". I'd imagine anyone with half a brain could figure it out.

HORROR OF THE BLOOD MONSTERS is a dull excuse for a thriller. Watch it only if you're desperate to find a cure for insomnia. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to take a nap. * -Christopher Blum



From America:

TIME COP

Largo Entertainment, in Association with JVC Entertainment, A Peter Hyams Film, 1994, A Signature Renaissance Darkhouse Production, Starring: Jean-Claude Van Damme, Ron Silver, Mia Sara, Gloria Reuben, Reviewed by Damon Foster

Like it or not, reviews of American martial arts films are here [in OC] to stay. Somehow, this average time-travel adven-

ture got excluded from last issue's "Yankee Dragons" section. But somehow, I thought I would have enjoyed TIMECOP more than I actually did; seeing as I actually enjoyed (well, almost) a couple of Jeanne Claude Van Damme's movies reviewed last issue. Although TIMECOP sucks as a martial arts movie (even as an American one, now that's pretty badly), time-travel movies have always been a fascinating concept to me; even dull ones like this manage to be intriguing at times.

Every country's film genre has its ridiculous clichés and predictable stereotypes, but for whatever reason, they especially annoy me when it's in an American film. More than once this routine, semi-futuristic crime drama had me rolling my eyes, and saying "here we go again", but at least this way I was able to get up, go to the restroom (I caught TIMECOP on HBO one lonely, boring night; it had no commercials and my Pause button had no effect), get more whisky, whatever—and I never once felt I missed anything important in the story.

But even though the story held my attention most of the time, let's not for-



Claude-Van Damme

get that the action scenes were done by Americans, and it certainly shows. There's uninteresting if not simply weak gunplay throughout, and Van Damme's skillful legwork is once again ruined by Chop-Edit nonsense, it's as though they want us to believe his martial arts skills are as limited as his English vocabulary. Earlier in the flick, he's attacked by some thugs in an apartment. Some long-haired Asian guy takes him on, resulting in the lamest, weakest knife-fight ever seen on film! James Dean's knife duel in REBEL WITH-OUT A CAUSE was more thrilling than this dainty child's play! Hell, I've seen kids tapping their desks with their pencils, and that made me flinch more than this far-too-careful knife confrontation. If they're so afraid of getting cut, they should simply use fake knives and go all-out.

It's no TIME MACHINE, or TIME TRAVELERS, and fails to deliver half the fun of the episode of I DREAM OF JEANIE where Barbara Eden zips Larry Hagman back to cowboy days, but as an average American film, it manages to be... well, uh, an average American film. Some scientist invents a time machine or whatever, and to make sure this new technology doesn't fall into the wrong hands, the proper authorities open a new branch of law enforcement, Time Cops. Claude Van Damme plays one of them, and if you can decipher his accent (and girls consider this sexy? I thought it sounded retarded), you just may be amused about this tale of corrupt politician McComb, who knows Claude is onto him and hires some thugs to wipe out Van Damme & his wife. McComb is using the time-traveling technique to insure his political victories, and in the process, changing the future and/or present. It skips back & forth between times, and eventually, the villains are killed and Jean Claude Van Damme (just how long is his name gonna' get? What's next? "John Steve Joe Don Jack Jean Claude Van Damme"?), manages to go back in time to prevent his pregnant wife's unnatural death (it seems her death wasn't really suppose to happen at all). * -Damon Foster

From India:

DAK BANGLA

(*"The House"*) 1983

Directed by Keshu

Ramsay, Starring:

Rafan Sippy,

Swapna, Aaloka,

Mazhar Khan, Re-

viewed by Massimo Lavagnini



I was unable to understand the dialogue because the copy I have comes from

Egypt, so the movie is in Hindi language with Cuneiform subtitles! But we can still taste the violence of this trashy colossal full of bloody scenes. The atmosphere is ruined, as usual, by some unnecessary, crappy ballads.

An heterogeneous group (an old married couple, some girls, a gang of punks and a transvestite) arrives in an isolated palace, guarded by a hunchbacked gardener. The guests of the house don't know that, in the basement, an ancient mummy has come to life again. It's the spirit of a man, executed one century before, for the hideous killing of the wife of a Maharajah. The thirst of blood of the "creature" can be quenched only with the lives of the new comers. * - *Massimo Lavagnini*



From Korea:

A.P.E.

A Jack H Harris Presentation, Released in 1976 by

Worldwide Entertainment Corp., Dir: Paul Leder, Starring Rod Arrants, Joanna DeVarona, Alex Nicol, Lee Nak Hoon, Woo Yoon Jong, Jerry Harke, Larry Chandler, Walt Myers, JJ Gould, Reviewed by Christopher Elum

Okay, stop me if you've heard this one: Some greedy guys discover a giant gorilla and decide to exploit the poor fellow. That darn monkey proves uncooperative about the whole thing and tears up the local real estate. The simian also defies all natural laws by falling for some human girl, usually a blonde.

Yes, it's the plot for every giant ape movie ever made. The only differences this time are that the movie is called A.P.E. and the setting is Seoul, South Korea. Why Seoul? Probably because it was the

cheapest place the producers could find. This was one of several flicks that were produced quickly to cash in on Dino DeLaurentis's KING KONG remake and this particular ripoff actually beat its inspiration to theaters. Koreans served as supporting actors and technical personnel, but the real stars were Americans.

Unfortunately for the producers (but great for us), all of these Americans are hilariously bad actors. Their Korean co-stars manage to put them to shame. Rod Arrants is top-billed as the never do-well goofball of a hero and Joanna DeVarona (dater Joanna Kerns of that TV "classic" GROWING PAINS) is appropriately dim as the airheaded heroine. Alex Nicol gets my vote as the standout of motley crew of ugly Americans for his stunning portrayal of a foul-mouthed military guy in dire need of a clue. Too bad you can barely hear him most of the time. It sounds as if the producers couldn't afford a microphone in his scenes. Considering this film's budget, it wouldn't surprise me.

This is a pretty funny movie, though not always intentionally. There are sarcastic references to King Kong and an arrogant director named Dino (hmmmm.) The best intentional humor occurs when our primate protagonist gives the viewer a famous finger gesture and I don't mean "thumbs up!" Even better is the unintentional humor, like the sequence where they show the exact same scene twice. Didn't those morons think we'd notice? And then there are the special effects. What is probably the shoddiest ape costume in film history is only the beginning. Watch for the creaking giant ape hand, the stilts standing in for ape legs and an unbelievably inept battle with a giant shark (shades of JAWS) and giant snake. Finally, there are the 3D effects scenes which are left in the non-3D video. You have to see them to believe them.



If you are looking for a classic giant ape movie, go watch the original KING KONG. However, if you're looking for a cheesy yet fun example of cheapo film-making, you should give A.P.E. a try. I'm fairly certain you won't be bored. **1/2 - *Christopher Elum*



From India:

KAFAN

("Shroud"), 1990, Directed by Dhirendra Bobra, Starring: Javed Khan, Jamuna, Raza Murad, Reviewed by Massimo Lavagnini

An impressive horror movie, ruined by the comically out of place (the ghost gives a box of magic chocolates to an imbecile, who becomes irresistible to women). Memorable is a violent sequence in which a guy is beheaded by a sheet of glass floating in the air!

Raped and killed by two killers of the Hindu mafia, an innocent girl comes back from the grave to settle the matter. The ghost has absolute need to canalize her spiritual energies into a human being. The perfect host is Neelam, fiancée of the cop Javed Khan. **1/2 - *Massimo Lavagnini*



From Japan:

LEGEND OF EIGHT SAMURAI

(Original Japanese title: "Satomi

Hakenden", based on the old novel of the same name, which, in turn was also the basis behind MESSAGE FROM SPACE), Toei, 1984, Exec. Prod. Haruki Kadokawa, Screenplay Toshio Kamata & Kinji Fukasaku, Song by John O'Banion, SFX Nobuo Yagima, Dir. Kinji



Fukasaku, Starring Hiroko Yakushimaru, Henry Sanada (Hiroeyuki Sanada), Sue Shiomi (Etsuko Shubomi), Frank Chiba & Kenji Ohba. Reviewed by Frank Strom

As a result of the mid-1970s popularity of chop sockey films in America and the early 1980s resurgence of popularity (mostly on video), a handful of oddball films snuck through and saw release in the states. **LEGEND OF THE EIGHT SAMURAI** is one of those oddball movies that can't really be classified as a martial arts picture, but nonetheless made its way into U.S. video store Kung Fu sections. Familiar faces like Sanada, Shiomi (called "Shibomi" here) and Chiba make this a must-see for Toei "Kaizo Ningen" nuts like yours truly. While the video lists the release date as 1984, I would suspect that **EIGHT SAMURAI** was actually made earlier—late 1970s or maybe even early 1980s. It definitely has the earmarks of a Japanese film of that period—an excessively long running time of two hours, ten minutes, lots of "heroic" deaths, and a bad English language pop song (which is very incongruous with the ancient Japan setting).

EIGHT SAMURAI is a very long (too long) and episodic adventure. It reminds me of movie serials from the 1940s like **BUCK ROGERS** or **FLASH GORDON** in its approach, making me wonder if this wasn't a theatrical compilation of a TV series. *DF* here, it most certainly was not! It's a theatrical, feature length epic. It's disjointedness may be a result of trying to cram so many chapters of the ancient "Samurai Haken-Den" novel into a single film. *DF*? This ain't mile-a-minute action! But, it does have the occasional sword fight, special effects, terrific locations, some soap opera, big handsome sets, and the odd monster or two—including an old blind witch who rips her face apart (yuck), releasing a giant centipede monster, cool! Some arresting visuals, too, my

favorite is when the evil Queen of the villains rejuvenates herself by bathing in a giant pool of boiling blood! This movie isn't total "trash" cinema, but no one's ever gonna see it as a "classic" like, say, **SEVEN SAMURAI** or something. It's loaded with cheap melodrama rather than serious dramatics, but thankfully not too much to become bothersome. Shiomi, Chiba & Ohba are wasted here, but Sanada is put to good use and he's fun to watch. On the whole, **EIGHT SAMURAI** is an enjoyable time-killer, if you don't mind movies in excess of two hours (personally, I have a short attention span and I need constant gratification—this flick is way too long for me). Best way to watch this picture is in several viewings, pretending it's a TV series.

Pretty Hiroko Yakushimaru is the last surviving member of her ancient clan and she's on the run from supernatural villains—Heads of a rival clan that have reincarnated some 100 years after Hiroko's ancestors killed them. Before dying, the villains put a curse on Hiroko's people, and have returned from the grave to enact revenge. Some ancient prophecy mumbo-jumbo says that eight warriors (the title calls them "samurai", the dialogue calls them "ninjas", but they don't seem to be either) will enable Hiroko to defeat the villains. She spends the bulk of the film locating the eight fighters (including the three big stars) and fending off the villains' attempts to thwart her. Sanada is the "surprise" member, being introduced early as a troublemaker and later being revealed as a member of the villains' family. Regardless, Hiroko & Sanada fall in love (they play the fucking pop song repeatedly to help illustrate this romance). After a lot of slow going, the final half hour is an exciting raid on the villains' fortress (beautiful set, with most of the heroes dying heroically, as expected).

***1/2 -Frank Strom*



From America:

MORTAL KOMBAT: THE ANIMATED VIDEO

1995 New Line Home Video, Produced by Lawrence Kasanoff & Allison Savitch, Written by Kevin Droney, Reviewed by Patricia Gonzales

"Hanna Barbera meets Virtual Fighter" would be the best way to describe what has to be the cheapest excuse for "cutting edge" animation I have ever seen. It's because of American-made crap like this that Japanese animation will always rule.

The idea goes something like this: Take one of the hottest fighting video games and animate it. It shouldn't be that difficult. It's been done before (**STREETFIGHTER**, **FATAL FURY 1&2**, **SAMURAI SHOWDOWN**, etc.). You would think that New Line Home Video would pull out all the stops for one of their hottest properties. Instead, we get cheaply animated characters walking around computer generated backgrounds. The end product looks horrible. To add insult to injury, many of the fight scenes are in slow motion (in case we should miss something). The entire story is basically an introduction to the characters and the events in the **MORTAL KOMBAT** live action movie (which was far superior to this animated farce). The only thing worthwhile on the video is 15-minute behind the scenes segment of the making of the live action **MORTAL KOMBAT** movie, as well as the full-length theatrical trailer.

Liu Kang (a student of the Order of Light Sect), Sonya Blade (a Special Forces Operative), and Johnny Cage (a martial arts film star) are invited to compete in **Mortal Kombat**, a martial arts competition run by the evil Shang Tsung...etc. etc., you know the rest of the story. If you don't know, go play the video game. It will probably be a more enjoyable experience and will only cost you \$25. *1/2 - Patricia Gonzales*

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KOREASAURUS

Being a Japanese sci-fi issue of OC, I saw no reason to include even more of the genre by adding [to this issue] another edition of "Terror Yaki", OC's continuing column on the sci-fi, fantasy & horror of Japan.

So what was I to do with the space left over? I spent a couple minutes thinking about it, and pondering what under-rated genre is deserving of its own column, even if it's just a one-shot deal. But unlike those involved in the O.J. Simpson trial, I wasn't about to waste endless months trying to come up with a solution. For years, Korean movies have been a part of OC, off & on. There are three basic film genres that Americans have seen come out of Korea:

1. Chop sockey ripoffs starring Korea's Dragon Lee. While not all of Korea's 1970s kung fu films featured Dragon Lee, there were a few released, though it often gets hard to tell which films are Korean and which are Chinese.

2. Superheroes, largely influenced by comedian Shim Hyung Rei's UREME ("Thunderhawk") fantasies. Though I can think of no English language publi-

cation other than OC which has given regular coverage to these live action/animated (ala' ROGER RABBIT) kiddie heroes, one fact exists: Korea has produced some cheap yet amusing movies like SUPER BATMAN AND MAZINGA V, YOUNG GU AND THE GOLDEN BAT, SKY WARRIOR: EAGLEMAN, SPARKMAN, HERO FLASH, and of course, another Shim Hyung Rei series involving magical folk hero "Super Hong Gil Tong".





3. More "classical" (snicker) period films and/or art films like EUNUGH, MULBERRY and SPINNING WHEEL. These are more 'serious', adult films which sometimes appear at International Phlegm-I mean Film Festivals, for the capuchino drinkers and art-snobs to gawk at.

But what about movies about monsters, dinosaurs and cavemen? Hell, whites have made ONE MILLION B.C., ONE MILLION YEARS B.C., WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH, THE LOST WORLD, THE LAND THAT TIME FORGOT and countless other dinosaur movies. For what its worth, the Filipinos attempted to make some sort of caveman adventure which got bastardized into our own HORROR OF THE BLOOD MONSTERS (see this issue's "Asian Oddities" section). I'm sure other countries have made their own ripoffs of JURASSIC PARK, QUEST FOR FIRE, THE FLINTSTONES, CLAN OF THE CAVE BEAR, etc. So wouldn't it seem logical that Korea, with its seemingly



growing interest in cinematic sci-fi, would also get in on the jurassic swing of things? To the best of my knowledge, the first time the Koreans tried to produce a movie about a giant reptile was with 1967's WANG MA GUI ("King Monster"), though this rubber-clad giant looked more like Roger Corman's monster in IT CONQUERED THE WORLD (1956), and was more of an imitation of KING



KONG, except that the big monster comes from alien flying saucers planning world conquest. Little else is known about this elusive, 80 minute movie because it was never released on video.

Fortunately, Korean dinosaurdom got a helping hand from the Japanese with YONGARY, MONSTER OF THE DEEP (see John Harrison's review, which is coming right up), also from 1967. YONGARY was as good as any average Japanese reptile-on-the-loose romp, but it was never successful enough to influence more Korean movies of this nature, so cinematic dinosaurs (Godzilla, Rodan, Varan, etc.) were pretty much left to the Japanese. But in recent years, with the international ground-breaking success of JURASSIC PARK, dinosaurs have at last temporarily come back into the international spotlight. While tacky farces like DINOSAUR ISLAND (full of the sexiest babes this side of Anna Nicole Smith) and Roger Corman's godawful CARNOSAUR fiascos continue to add unintended chuckles for late night TV addicts watching Pay-Per-View or whatever, Korea, of all places, has added their own distinct variation on the dinosaur theme, as is proven by the sensational TYRANNO'S CLAW, also reviewed here.

There's yet another new Shim Hyung Rei dino flick, called YOUNG GU AND THE DINOSAUR JU JU. Unfortunately, at the time of this typing, the movie hasn't been released on video. But available photos would indicate that the film's marauding reptile bears more than a slight resemblance to 1967's Yongary, so it could possibly be a sequel to the 1967 Japanese co-production. It wouldn't surprise me, since the other Young Gu film (also starring Shim Hyung Rei in the title role), 1992's YOUNG GU AND THE GOLDEN BAT (see review in OC'92), was also a sequel to a much older Japanese film (OGON BATO, 1966).

YONGARY, MONSTER OF THE DEEP

(Korean title DAI KOESU YONG-KARI, German title GODZILLAS TODESPRANKE) 1967, Dir. Kim Ki-Duk, Written by Yung Sung-Suh, Produced by Cha Tae-fan, Starring Nam Chung Im & Oh Young Il, With Special Assistance from Daisai (Tokyo, Japan), Reviewed by John Harrison

Here's a real oddity that's worth searching out: A Korean Godzilla ripoff that was financed partly with Japanese money. While it doesn't come close to the best of the Japanese giant movies, it's still an enjoyable film in its own right.

Like many oriental films, it's hard to tell just how good or bad the acting in

YONGARY is, when you have to suffer atrocious dubbing. So I'll skip the performances and get down to the more important things. There are two scenes which are indelibly etched in my memory. The first takes place in a teen nightclub, where young Koreans get so possessed by the (very bad) rock & roll blaring from the PA, they start pouring their beer all over each other's heads while gyrating wildly! And in the film's most hilarious moment, Yongary interrupts his destruction in order to indulge in a spot of dancing, performing a monstrous version of the twist to the same horrid tune heard in the nightclub (although, compared to some of today's Top 40 hits, the rock music in YONGARY isn't half bad). These moments come across as quite bizarre and surreal, since apart from those two scenes, the film doesn't really play itself for unintentional laughs.

As for the film's special effects, well, I think they're pretty good for a country known more for monstrous dictators than its monster movies. They aren't for one moment convincing, of course, but there are plenty of destruction and battle scenes, and the film is rarely dull for more than a few minutes. The miniatures look about as good as any from a typical episode of THE THUNDERBIRDS.

The bottom line should be that YONGARY is a movie obviously aimed at younger audiences, and my nine year-old nephew absolutely loves it. I think it's kinda' cute, too. In the U.S., YONGARY was purchased by American International Pictures and sold directly to television, and is currently available on cassette. **1/2 John Harrison

TYRANNO'S CLAW

(P' TI LA NO BAR-TO) Produced, Written, Directed by and Starring Shim Hyung Rei, Released on video by Daewoo Electronics Co. 9/1/94, Reviewed by Damon Foster

To think all these years I've been criticizing Korean comedian/turned actor (and now, turned director & producer) as the most moronic retard on Earth! Now that he's finally in complete control, no longer at the mercy of inept script writers who want to cast him into the stereotype of an infantile idiot, I can honestly see now that he's got some serious talent, and is definitely the Steven Spielberg of Seoul! Good old Shim Hyung Rei pleasantly surprised me with this excellent movie which has his name all over it! TYRANNO'S CLAW is possibly the best Korean movie I've ever seen, and definitely my favorite cavemen-

against-dinosaur film. Though many scenes of the villainous tyrannosaurs (i.e. the close-up of its eyes, and when its foot stomps in the mud) are blatantly derivative of JURASSIC PARK, TYRANNO'S CLAW owes plenty more to ONE MILLION YEARS BC, except that the cavemen are grittier, grosser, and more realistic. No clean, light skinned, hair-combed, make-up attired, padded-push up bra-wearing Raquel Welch here!

The really great thing about TYRANNO'S CLAW is that it could be shown in any country without alteration! There's very little Korean dialogue (about 10% of what the cavemen say is Korean, though non-Koreans wouldn't guess), it's all typical cavemen grunts & yells, and it's basically a non-existent language! This film needs no dubbing or subtitles, as there's really no complex dialogue at all, audiences of any language can watch this film and easily figure out what's going on! It's never boring and we don't need dubbing or subtitles! Hell even ONE MILLION YEARS BC started off with a voice over narrative, but TYRANNO'S CLAW is so simple and basic that no narration is needed. It's amazing that no international distributor has picked up this user-friendly film for release in America. Because there's no translation problems, I highly recommend this to any dinosaur fan, regardless of what language you speak. I wish there were more movies like this ones which speak through action, not words.

It only took Shim Hyung Rei (and his crew of 3,400 people) two years to make this movie. The budget was extraordinarily high for a Korean flick, somewhere inbetween 7 and 8 million dollars for the dinosaur props alone! This doesn't surprise me, since TYRANNO'S CLAW is really well done, the dinosaurs are great and the pacing is swift enough to insure that the Scan button was never once necessary. Jaded fans of JURASSIC PARK will no doubt gawk and say: "Them dinosaurs in TYRANNO'S CLAW are just rubber props!" Even so, they're damn good rubber props, and despite its lower budget, I found TYRANNO'S CLAW to be infinitely more entertaining than JURASSIC PARK, an over rated mess of irritating characters and computer FX (no matter how sophisticated, computer FX will always look artificial and cartoonish) which would have given me a headache had it not put me to sleep! TYRANNO'S CLAW, on the other hand, was a movie which kept me mesmerized, I had planned on only watching about 15 minutes of it at a time (it's how I often get through untranslated films), but once I had hit the Play button, the flick had me hooked, by the time you

read this, I will probably have watched it several times.

Indeed, the special effects are outstanding by Korean standards, and good enough for acceptance in any country. The tyrannosaurus prop is a huge, beautifully designed creation, perhaps the most incredible structure created for a Korean movie. I wouldn't be surprised if a Japanese FX maker or two had a hand in this, but certainly there's no proof. There are also a couple triceratops costumes, and these are probably the best triceratops props I've seen, even comparable to some of Ray Harryhausen's animation oldies. There's also a bone-headed, hopping dinosaur added to the film for comic relief, and of course, the obligatory pteronodon taking people to its nest to feed its hatchlings. I liked all these slick dinosaurs so much that I was disappointed that most of them (even a friendly triceratops) got killed, in rather bloody deaths.

The problem with a praiseful, 4-star review like this is that people will get their hopes up and expect *TYRANNO'S CLAW* to be a real masterpiece. Were this a Japanese film or possibly even a HK film, *TYRANNO'S CLAW* might not seem quite as excellent. But take it from somebody who's seen a lot of really awful Korean films, ones which were storebought toys & masks from K Mart, and use them as actual props in their theatrical films. Other Korean movies abruptly switch to a cartoon-format when the scenes involving more ambitious sets, vehicles & creatures requires too much money to shoot in live action. Many of the Korean movies I've seen are basically just kiddie films, which have the most naive, embarrassing humor ever committed to film. Considering the low standards of Korean movie making, *TYRANNO'S CLAW* can be considered a masterpiece in its own right, or maybe its own left. It's rare to see a Korean movie which

could even possibly have an audience outside of Korea, but *TYRANNO'S CLAW* is just such a film. It definitely blows away Roger Corman's crappy *CARNOSAUR*, which makes *TYRANNO'S CLAW* look like a masterpiece.

Amazingly, Shim Hyung Rei used the childish comedy (his trademark) only sparingly this time. There's only one

girlfriend Oma escape their neanderthal tribe because they're fed up with their savage, incredibly brutal leader's insistence that anyone who opposes him be sacrificed to a local tyrannosaurus rex. So the pair flee, only to be pursued by their former tribe members. As they explore unknown territory (still chased by vengeful neanderthals), they encounter new

dangers: Giant cave rats who walk on their hind legs, a tribe of apeman warriors and of course a pteronodon (not the film's most realistic creation, especially during flying scenes, but cool, none-the-less) and its ravenous offspring. What all these creatures have in common is that they have an appetite for neanderthals. Fortunately, Shim rescues a more advanced caveman, possibly a cromagnon (who bears a resemblance to a young *Liang Chia Jen*) from a tar-pit and makes a friend. The difference between neanderthals & cromagnons seems to be that the cromagnons are a little cleaner, have a more polished language (basic Korean?), and unlike the neanderthals (who have ugly teeth like a horse with cavities), they seem more concerned about dental hygiene. The family of cromagnons teaches Shim about having pets (in this case a couple of cute but never sappy triceratopses), and the most advanced, lethal invention of the stone-age; a bow & arrow! A weapon which instantly kills carnivorous, simian people-eaters, rival neanderthals, and deadly pteronodons.

Shim also uses this for revenge against his old chief (the bossy dictator who ruled his tribe with an iron hand), and for an encore, wipes out the ever ominous tyrannosaurus using fire. All seems peaceful at the end, until the T. rex's eye suddenly opens before the ending credits, and I'm most definitely looking forward to the sequel, already in the works!!!

***-Damon Foster



furt joke, and the remainder is "Three Stooges"-like slapstick, the cave-men always seem to be hitting each other on the head with rocks. But this is not a kiddie film. There's enough bloodshed and violence to give children nightmares, it's probably the bloodiest dinosaur movie I've seen. Somehow, I don't think this could be shown on American TV stations uncut.

The story has Shim Hyung Rei & his

LETTERS CONTINUED...

as cool & funny as you guys. But then, nobody is. *[John Marshall here! Gosh, Barry, anyone geeky enough to read OC in the first place must also be familiar with SENTAL and G-FAN, where my writing has also been appearing of late. Everyone knows (because, hey, who DOESN'T read my stuff?) that I've always had a wacky, off-the-wall writing style. True, I adapt it slightly for OC as I do to match the editorial voice of all the magazines in which I appear. That's what makes me the pro that I am. Plus, I get to say "fuck" in OC, which normally gets edited out in the magazines that actually pay me money. If after all these years, you aren't fucking well aware that Damon Foster is the fucking heart and soul of OC, well, then, uh, the heck with you. As for my being a "disciple" of Damon, well, I went out for disciple but all I got was Initiate. I'm working my way up to Disciple. Oh, and yes, it is a shame that nobody's as cool and funny as we are. But how could they be? We appreciate the compliment! -JM]*

The **HK Heroes** and **Kaizo Ningen** Update were of value because they actually offered some new information and insight, but are constantly interrupted by "I used to pee through knot-holes in the wooden fence", space filling nonsense. You have an uncanny ability to take up a column with this unwanted information. When you're not adapting this easy-way-out tact, things do get interesting. The review of **MIRROSMAN** was filled with information and insight. But you continue to write in the first person with confessions like "By now you know I'll never trash FX on any Tsuburaya show" (why not?), which means limited insight on the text of the show and no objectivity.

The scale of the problem is encapsulated in your bizarre review of **KWAIDAN**. Despite your attempt to make your audience think the contrary, you obviously know something about interpreting film and film criticism. You know that every book and magazine ever written about film (horror-oriented or not) raves about **KWAIDAN**. It's apparent you realize that

this is a fine film— one of the outstanding examples of truly supernatural horror— but you haven't got the patience or maturity to comprehend it. No, there aren't many special effects per se, but there are abundant cinematographic effects, evidently not enough for a short-attention span afflicted individual like yourself. / *DF here I'm sorry, I missed those last four paragraphs; my mind wandered off while I watched a far more interesting particle of dust fall to the floor.* / *DF:* By admitting your inability to appreciate the deliberate and inarguably effective chills in **KWAIDAN**, you put yourself squarely in the mass media, Beavis & Butthead/ Superbowl/ Rush Limbaugh-loving crowd you so despise. These are the people who are for the most part incapable of appreciating a film like **KWAIDAN**, one that lacks "quick fix" special effects, fisticuffs

That does it! You're telling me to "stop"? Look you Politically Correct whining bomo, nobody tells me what to do. Don't you dare boss me around, flamer! Criticism & insults are one thing, but when a hasbeen (or rather, never-was-been) like you gives me an order, that's the last straw: I never held a gun to your head and forced you to buy OC. For the record, I'm gradually trying to tone down the vulgarities & humor from OC, but when I get letters from people like you, who have a lot of time on their hands, it's hard not to regress to an even more cynical, offensive phase. -DF/

Barry Kaufman
Illinois

I was impressed with your history and non-Gamera genre film commentary. I had always wanted to follow-up the exceedingly dry history in JFE#12 with a look at Dai-ri's genre filmography. You did it! And it's great. / *So tell Barry Kaufman to quit bullying me. -DF/* And your analysis of the various versions of the Gamera stories (original release vs. ALP TV release vs. Sandy Frank release) is a great help in determining the print to seek out on video. Also appreciated the personnel bios and the wonderful photos & poster art.

Again, thanks for the copy of OC and congrats on the Dai-ri



Now from Toho: **GODZILLA VS. DESTROYER!**

and explosions. Guess I must be one of the millions of "intellectuals or art-fags" / *Please leave your unique sexual preference to yourself. I respect your viewpoint and right to your own sexual taste (we accept people of all classes, ethnic groups, & sexual orientation), but this is OC, not PIERCED MALE NIPPLES QUARTERLY.* As for **KWAIDAN**, please forgive me for having a personal opinion, how dare me! To think that I voiced a view that differs from your own. I'll be careful next time: *I'll remember- Barrie Kaufman right, Damon Foster wrong. -DF/* who loves this film. Oh, you probably meant pseudo-intellectual. And try expressing your opinion clearly without insulting anyone and everyone, and you might actually make sense. And if you genuinely can't find anything to write about, then stop!

section.

Greg Shoemaker
Ohio

Damon,
OC is the greatest! Don't go changing!

Patrick Macias
California

I agree with your comments on Gamera from OC#6 (or "OC#21", for us insiders). People will probably jump on the Gamera bandwagon when it becomes a hit. Yes, the two-faced geeks will say they've loved Gamera since they were kids, but probably have never seen them 'till now. I've loved Gamera since being a kid and am glad to see a lot of attention

given to the series in your mag, plus one like G-FAN, which also did a huge retrospective on him. I do, however think this is the third rising of the turtle star. The first wave being the films when they came out and on TV. The second, I believe is when they started making fun of them on MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000. I noticed a lot of people who had never heard of seen these films started talking about them like they were the next PLAN 9 FROM OUTERSPACE. And now we have the new film with tons of publicity and new merchandise, and Steven Seagal's daughter (which alone will probably have people checking it out). /

It doesn't matter how good the films & their FX get, the American mainstream will probably always look at Gamera and other Japanese monsters as "the next PLAN 9 FROM OUTERSPACE". It's as though the critics will dismiss a Japanese monster movie as being crap before they even saw it. It's all prejudice, and I think TV shows like MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000, though amusing in their own right, are doing more harm than good. -DF/

Anyway, continue to put out such a great publication. You are a true oriental movie genius to most of us and we depend on you. Oh, by the way, are you going to G-Con? Just thought I would check. I know lots of people who are going. Since you are the King of Monster Knowledge, it would only seem right that you be there.

Vince Cornelius
Ohio

Dear Vince,

Thanks a lot for the ego-boosting compliments. Hell, one more letter like that and I might just become confident enough to leave my house in the daytime when people can see me! But one thing Vince, be careful about what you say about newer Gamera fans, since we don't want to hurt Barry Kaufman's feelings again. Remember, you and I are wrong like everyone else in the world except for Barrie Kaufman. My life seems so meaningless now that the glorious, almighty Kaufman has labeled my baby, OC as being "Kaiju Blasphemous". To not be "Kaiju Blasphemous" is the most important thing in my life. I'm so disappointed in myself. Yeah, right.

Nope, I'm not much of a convention

goer anymore. G-Con sounded like it was fun, but I can barely afford a drive down the street to the local crackhouse, and certainly can't buy a plane ticket. Besides, I'm (snicker) "Kaiju Blasphemous", remember, I would probably be crucified upon arrival. -DF/

I really liked your Gamera coverage. It was especially helpful that you went over the various differences in those that have two English dubs. I also enjoyed your Dinei article and didn't put me to sleep at all. The reviews were as informative and entertaining as always. I'm especially grateful for your coverage of THE THRILLING SWORD. I didn't know much about it (only that it was a Chinese "Snow White") and had no intention of checking it out. Now I feel differently. So OC is still a success in its mission to

came cat, everyone already had EBIRAH! I'm terribly sorry for getting everyone's hopes up. As for this elusive STAR GODZILLA, check out AR's info below: -DF/

/August "I've-been-researching-this-stuff-for-25-years (neener-neener-neener) Ragone here, sorry abem, oh ah, well... COUGH! That's much better now I hope that I don't offend anyone, oh sorry, I mean, I hope that I DO offend someone (not necessarily Barry Kaufman), anyway. "Star Godzilla" appeared as an advert in a 1978/79 issue of Variety, and was probably stopped by Tobo's legal offices (they've stopped everyone else for Christssakes, and went the way of "Godzilla Vs. Cleveland" or some such, which went onto being renamed "It Ate Cleveland", and went bellyup before the cameras ever rolled. So "Star Godzilla" was just wishful thinking on a HK/Taiwan film company's part (like Tobo was going to make their own new G-film by 1980). Yeah right! sorry, I'm being both Kaiju and Tobo Blasphemous! I'd better go before someone gets offended and tries to beat me up! (Yeah right ya pencil-necked geeks just try! -August Ragone!)

"Thank you for being a breath of fresh air in two fandoms that are too uptight for their own good, namely Japanese live action sci-fi and HK cinema. You're doing a great service to fans who know they're only movies. All the best."

Christopher Elam
Louisiana

expose its readers to new and obscure movies & TV shows. Congratulations! I hope these comments haven't made you even more egotistical that you already are.

I see that OC#22 (aka OC#7) is going to have an article on "a rarely seen Godzilla movie". What is that? Surely not that STAR GODZILLA I heard about long ago, the probably non-existent Hong Kong movie. I would do just about anything to get a copy of that flick. /DF here. A number of people were excited and curious to know about the so-called "rarely seen Godzilla movie" reviewed in last issue. Sadly, it was only the British dub of GODZILLA VS THE SEA MONSTER, called EBIRAH, HORROR OF THE DEEP! When I first got that obscure print, I thought it was incredibly rare, a truly unique find. But by the time that issue

OC#6 was arguably the best yet. I was crying with laughter after the Editorial. It was interesting to read up on what went into Gamera. His films didn't really flick by bix when I was a youngster. A team up of him and Godzilla would garner some attention.

Boy Damon, you sure know how to pick 'em. Whoceet! Tan Yun Yee, my oh my! Hopefully she'll appear in a feature length film. Nice clip on Michiko Nishiwaki. It is next to impossible to find any info on her. I heard that she was in the June issue of Muscle & Fitness. Her in a Category 3 version of "Green Snake"? I must see that movie.

What the hell was wrong with that idiot from Sweden? Wardell Sims Jr.
Ohio



Dear Wardell,

You're not the only one to scoff at that closed-minded Swedish reader's ramblings. It's always so strange to be attacked by one-dimensional nobodies who don't understand all the hard work which goes into making diverse, wacky magazines like OC! I only include hate mail of that nature because it can be hilarious reading material (OC aims to entertain, especially when I snap back and make them look like complete fools. I accept all comments and try to take all advice into consideration. But there really is no magazine out there, for better or worse, which is like OC. There are Japantasy zines, there are endless HK rags, there are countless cartoon publications, but there's only one broadly focused Asian zine with a cynical sense of humor. So tell me readers, what do you think? Do you want me to make OC exactly like all the others? -DF

Dear Damon,

GODZILLA VS. DESTROYER!

I'm doing something which I thought I'd never do, writing a letter to you. Some time ago, I bought your Godzilla issue of OC. I couldn't believe the level of nastiness on your part upon the reviews, reviewers and everything else. My first thought was, this guy is a complete frustrated jerk. I can't say 'idiot', because your comments were not stupid and I could see some knowledge, but the aggressiveness was incredible. To the point where it was not enjoyable to read. My reaction was... I'll never buy anything else written by this guy.

Then in April, I'm in New Jersey for the Chiller Theater Con. While in NY City in the afternoon I pick up your newest magazine **HEROES ON FILM**. I've always been crazy about superheroes, and although I've collected comic books for many years in my youth, 3-D live action films and TV series are what I like best. I've spent the glorious 1960s (for TV) watching all the superheroes produced, and was often going to all the SF, horror & fantasy movies I could see. Japanese productions always brought something special to me. Godzilla is my #1 idol since my teens, and still is.

Living in Montreal, probably one of

the largest cultural melting pot cities of North America. We get practically everything that comes out in the USA, plus a great deal European stuff, either dubbed in English or French. Because of that, I saw a lot of things that have never been released in America, but were available in their French versions. I'm talking about Japanese films, Mexican films (Santo), and Italians (Hercules and Machiste) that never saw the big or small screens in America.

In the 1970s & 1980s I became aware of all the great stuff produced in Japan that didn't reach the North American shore. By the mid-'80s, I finally had my own great correspondent in Japan and started to really get into that stuff. I'm doing well in ULTRAMAN, I'm only however discovering the Kamen Rider series, after getting the last three films, KAMEN RIDER SHIN, and KAMEN RIDER ZETO. I've seen a couple episodes of KAMEN RIDER BLACK RX, that's it. Ahhh. I have so much more to learn.

In Mexican heroes, I have 44 Santo,

before buying it for the sole reason of the back cover. The nice color full page reproduction of the Mexican poster of LUCHA A MUERTE. Color reproduction of Mexican posters is not something you can find everywhere. So I said even if I hate Damon's guts. That alone is worth buying it. I read it anyway, and was pleasantly surprised.

The nasty attitude which bug me so much in OC was not as overdone in this mag. It was actually good to read and I'm not myself a cutesy pie type. Mags which everything has got to be nice, everything is pink and beautiful... NAH! That pisses me off. And I certainly agree with you a 100% on certain mag that praises everything... The POWER RANGER synopsis in Sentai (is it the mag we're talking about, right?) *I wasn't intentionally singling out any one magazine, though SENTAI is certainly a candidate. However, it was one of the better superbero rags out there, I was actually referring to all the stupid kiddo books & mags in*



plus some Blue Demon, Mil Mascaras and Son of Santo. As for Italian heroes, a dozen Hercules and some Maciste. Those are really difficult, they've been so screwed-up by American translations. Maciste has been redubbed Samson, Hercules, Atlas, Colossus, Goliath, Maxus, Son of Samson, Son of Hercules, etc. Fortunately the French versions are more faithful and I've been able to get some real information in French books of the cinema. In one words, I like heroes. And a mag on heroes is long overdue.

I almost didn't bought it when I saw your name in it, I didn't feel like reading a festival of profanities and insults ever again. I juggle with your mag in the store

grocery stores which offer no insight to the shows themselves. There's more to the genre than knowing what Tommy the White Ranger likes to eat for lunch -DF/ Yeah, those over long synopses were boring, useless and just prove that they had nothing to say on the subject, but did it anyway in order to improve their sales.

The way that you control your honesty in HOF is something which I can admire and will definitely be a regular buyer of your mag. I'm interested in information, honest opinion is really appreciated but if I may be so bold as to make a suggestion. I prefer that you talk about the things that you like *(But most people would rather I cease talking about my-*

self -DFF/ rather than bashing what you dislike. However, I appreciate an honest slam down on something you dislike much more than an insincere ass-kissing of a bad-product. The issue of HOF has changed my mind about you, there is a potential to be more creative than destructive. I hope you improve in that direction. I'm not suggesting that you change what you are (no way), just that you channel your fiery passion to better ends.

A week has passed since I wrote the first twelve pages of this novel. ORIENTAL CINEMA #6 just came out, so I bought it, I've always been a Gamera fan. Your editorial was delightful, especially those comments about people who will pretend that they always liked Gamera in the past, even though they shit & pissed on it for 30 years. I've always liked those kinds of films, good or bad. GAMERA VS. BARUGON has always been my favorite, not because of the monsters, but because of the story, soundtrack, and the above-average production values. Even though Gamera's films took the worst of Godzilla and dragged it even deeper in shitland, one thing for sure is they're not boring, they're great fun.

The issue is really great. Or perhaps I'm getting used to your style, it kind of repulsed me at first, but now I'm getting used to it. I've convinced two friends to buy the Gamera issue, they both enjoyed it very much. OC reminds me of Devo. First time I saw them, I laughed so hard thinking they were the worst band I ever saw. Finally a year later, when I started getting the jokes, I got into them and still enjoy the old stuff up to 1981. Every time I become sick of hearing the popular stuff on the radio, I put on an old Devo disk and it cleans the system so good.

Andre Dubouis
Canada

First, I have a correction for OC#6. On page 6, while writing about Dizer's history, you state that GATE OF HELL won the Grand Prize at the 1954 Academy Awards. The Oscars don't give out a

Grand Prize (maybe you were thinking of some film festival). Presumably what you meant was the movie won the Academy Award for best Foreign Film (by the way, GATE OF HELL also won the Best Costume Design Oscar).

Turning to OC#7, the Victor Sen Yung piece had some mistakes. No, he didn't join the Charbe Chan film series only after it had left 20th Century Fox and gone to Monogram; his first appearance as Number Two Son was in the Fox movies. In fact, Victor Sen Yung is not in the first Monogram Charlie Chan films at all. He rejoined the series, after Benson Fong (Number Three Son) had left. You're correct in stating Victor Sen Yung played "Number Two Son, Jimmy", but you neglected to mention that the characters' name was later changed (without explanation) to Tommy (confusing matters is that "Number Three Son" played by Benson Fong was also called Tommy Chan). As for the total number of Charlie

makes it clear you enjoyed the movie, it's also clear you didn't pay attention to its title, because you keep calling the film "The Teshouse and the August Moon".

Lana Zukowski
Philadelphia

Your coverage of U.S. martial arts movies was uproariously funny. I agree with you, most are pretty bad even when compared to the very worst of Chinese & Japanese fare. However, who else besides you would even attempt to provide an overview of them? It's a thankless job, but I guess someone has to do it.

Speaking of thankless jobs, let me add my vote (for whatever that's worth) for continued coverage of 1960s Chinese movies. I appreciate this exposure for such a neglected genre. Finding any Chinese movies, even the old chop-sockeys, in these parts is fairly difficult, so OC is usually my only chance to get a glimpse of such unusual and rare stuff.

Don't let criticism from the clueless get you down (though I doubt it does). Anyone who slams OC and you so viciously just doesn't get it. Too bad for them. And, speaking of zines, I hope I'm not included in the "sniveling brown-nosers" from Sental's letters pages. I tried to be complimentary with them because they tried their best. *After there's one thing I've said that I regret, it's last issue's attack on SENTAL, which I intended to be funny. A number of friends have been disappointed at the way I joked about that magazine. It was never my intention to start another fanzine war, especially with a zine I so frequently read! Hell, the bottom line is that I did include their address to promote them, I wished them all the success in the world, even if the writing style bores me sometimes. As for the "sniveling brown-nosers", I wasn't singling out any one person, but all their letters seemed exactly the same. I guess unlike me, they don't receive hate mail! Gee, I wonder why! -DFF*

Christopher Elam
Louisiana



Chan film Victor Sen Yung made, according to the book *Charlie Chan at the Movies*, the figure is 18, not 34, as you wrote.

There was a bit on actor Clyde Kusatsu, but you spelled his last name differently. Was that a printing error or did he spell his name that way at one time? *I have no idea! I don't even know who the hell this Clyde Kusatsu name is, I couldn't spot him out of a crowd of two people, even if one was a black female amputee! I just included him because his name seemed to pop up when I was doing research on USA martial arts flicks or Asian American actors. -DFF*

While your review of THE TEAHOUSE OF THE AUGUST MOON

I had discovered OC with issue #7 and was quite taken by it. I grew up in 1970s grindhouses in Chicago (the oriental theater still exists but is boarded up, and may yet re-open), and I saw DRUNKEN MASTER 2 a year ago at Film Center of the Art Institute of Chicago, but it just was not the same as seeing it in a grindhouse.

Anyway, I loved your magazine until I got to John Marshall's review of the woebegone Japanese film THE LAST WAR. Towards the end of the review he mentions one of the actors is handsome, then says, "I'm not a fag, so back down, homo readers!" I happen to be gay and was offended. *Sorry about that, but everybody gets offended at something. Contrary to how it must seem, we don't hate homosexuals, but enjoy joking around in general! Over the years OC has added cheap laughs by spoofing just about every ethnic group & class of people there is, but since you've only recently begun*

(which I've done before, it never quite happens) to tone down the homo jokes (ie Q In a Greek prison, how do you separate the men from the boys? A: With a crow-bar, in future OCs. Come to think of it, John didn't actually say anything bad about gays in his column--and besides, what John could have meant was that he's not a British cigarette, and that he simply wants all homosapiens to get out of his way. Uh-oh, I hope I don't receive hate mail from England's cigarettes and every homosapien who reads this! -DNF, and was offended, and I think he ought to know that gay people abound in the motion picture biz. I was hoping, since a new century is around the corner, that people could be a little more tolerant, but Marshall's blatant display of homophobia turned me off, big time.

C.Y. Gaffney, Jr.
Chicago

CA please write me again? I lost your address. And by the way, were you born with those? Crawabunga! Anyway, as you can see, I was just saving the bendover boys in the audience the trouble of sending me Valentines cards. As far as the implied homophobia, my gay friends (many of whom are, indeed, part of the Hollywood community) tell me that words like "fag" and "queer" are like bloody badges of honor to the people who have to fight so hard for recognition as artists & human beings, just because they have mates of the same sex! So where's the homophobia? You owe me an apology, Mr. C.Y.! In today's world, inferring that someone is homophobic is as bad as calling them a cocksucker! Okay, well--bad example, but you get my point. Unfortunately I fear, judging from your rush to hostility, that you won't apologize. I hope my fears are wrong, and that you take advantage of

my offer to apologize and set things straight. Might as well clear your name since, obviously there will be no C.Y. Gaffney the Third to carry it on!

John Marshall
Now Beating a
Drum at a Gay
Riggs Rally Near
You

Kudo's on
OC? Once again,
you've created another cool issue,
complete with annoying little grubbers like Jesse Simpson (where's QJ, when you need him?), as big a

whiner as that dumb, gas-headed Swedish mesthal Wombat!

I love that picture of Cynthia Rothrock on the cover! She looks really fetching in that outfit! What I wouldn't give to go and tickle her right now, especially her feet! (Oops, sorry about my fetishes, Damon!) That's okay, I forgive you. I'll let you in on a little secret, I too have a fetish or two of my own. You see, unlike most men, I like female breasts, and stare at them whenever I can. -DNF Well, I gotta go, I'm starting to dream about Cynthia again! This time, she's a pirate, and I'm her cabin boy, and she's making me lick her boots! Yum yum!

Kevin Lonergan
Massachusetts



JOHN MARSHALL RESPONDS

I'm deeply offended by C.Y. Gaffney Jr.'s statement that my dumb little "bomo" comment was, as he put it, "a blatant display of homophobia." All I said was that I thought Akira Takarada was handsome (although nothing compared to Akira Kubo--oob baby), and that I wasn't a fag so the homo readers should back off. I mean, what's so bad about that? I know OC has gay readers, and I know that magazine readers love to get worked up and write in. I received 308 replies from female readers back when I ran my address in a previous OC (by the way, would "Tracy L." of Beverly Hills

whiner as that dumb, gas-headed Swedish mesthal Wombat!

Kevin Lonergan
Massachusetts

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